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THE POST-SOVIET IMAGINARY:

CONSTRUCTING NEW RUSSIAN FANTASIES

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

(IN SOCIOLOGY)

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ABSTRACT

"The Post-Soviet Imaginary: Constructing New Russian Fantasies" examines interviews and essays of one hundred seventy eight students (age 15-22), whom I met in April 1996 and April 1997 in Barnaul, Siberia (Russia). Using the texts of the students' descriptions of such basic notions as "gender," "nationality," "man," "woman," and "Motherland" as my main source, I tried to understand how the young people in a post-Soviet Siberian city located themselves within the available symbolic representations of gender and national identity.

The interpretation of the students' texts was rooted in two major theoretical frames: structuralist and post-structuralist analysis on one hand and the psychoanalytic theory on the other. The former illuminated the main narrative mechanisms through which the students expressed their experience. As the first chapter argues, it was the logic of oppositions and binaries, the logic of cognitive inconsistency and supplementary negation that framed the students' verbal constructions. In turn, the psychoanalytic approach (mostly in the forms of Melanie Klein's and Julia Kristeva's versions) was instrumental for grasping one of the key oppositions indicated by the students – the opposition between the new Russian woman and the new Russian man. These two figures were called upon to express the students' anxiety caused by the loss of the symbolic sign-posts of the Soviet epoch. By using object relations theory, I detected a *paranoid structure* in the students' fantasies about the new Russian man and the new Russian woman, which manifested itself first of all in such rhetorical phenomena as splitting, consolidation, and symbolic inhibition. My further analysis of the metaphors and associations used by the students led me to identifying these two models of national and gender identification as the object of abjection (the new Russian woman) and the object of narcissistic identification (the new Russian man).

LIST OF CONTENTS

<u>INTRODUCTION:</u>	1
<i>Mother-Russia And Her Children</i>	2
<i>The Hibernating Identity</i>	6
<i>Gender In Russia(n)</i>	11
<i>Methodology</i>	15
<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	19
<u>CHAPTER I: The World Of Words: Coming To Terms</u>	27
<i>Signs Of Negation</i>	28
<i>The Attraction of Opposites</i>	46
<u>Chapter II: The New Russian Woman: The Fatal Splitting</u>	57
<i>The Siberian Piccadilly Circus</i>	59
<i>Signifying The (W)Hole</i>	67
<i>Splitting the Mother</i>	78
<i>(Ex)changing Values</i>	92
<u>Chapter III: The World of Things: Inflating Prices</u>	104
<i>Pierre Cardin Incorporated</i>	107
<i>The Matter of Size</i>	120
<u>CHAPTER IV: The New Russian Man: The Narcissistic Screening</u>	131
<i>The Navel of the World</i>	132
<i>(A)Voiding the Self</i>	144
<i>Acting Professional(ly)</i>	151
<i>A Bear-able Mirror</i>	157
<u>SUMMARY</u>	174
<u>APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES</u>	179
<u>APPENDIX B: SAMPLES OF STUDENT ESSAYS</u>	180
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	185
<u>TABLE 1.</u>	190

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes language can point out the connections which normally are not apparent in day-to-day life. For example, people who mediate their existence through English language can remain gender ambiguous in their speech for quite a long time. In Russian, (grammatical) gender is omnipresent: by describing their nationality, people always must specify their gender. Nationality in Russia(n) does not come alone: there is no place for *a Russian* as such. A *Russian* is always either a Russian *man* (*russkii*, *óõññèèé*) or a Russian *woman* (*russkaya*, *óõññèàý*).

The main purpose of my MPhil thesis lies beyond mere analysis of a grammatically gendered Russian nationalism. The questions in focus are rather different and they deal not so much with problematizing the historicity of the gender/nation division in Russia but with reconsidering the processes of negotiation and adjustment individuals must go through in order to locate themselves (in gendered as well as national terms) within the domain of cultural symbols. In other words, the thesis tries to explore the historically shaped dynamic of gender and national subjectification, that is, a process of the individuals' active taking up of "the discourses through which they and others speak/write the world into existence *as if the[se discourses] were their own*."¹

There is, however, yet another aspect of this process of discursive subjectification which I will explore in the thesis. While fully acknowledging the role of discourse in a person's subjectification, I would like to explore a situation in which the person cannot

¹ Davies, B. (1994) *Shards of Glass: Children Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, p. 13.

find him or herself within the frame of available discursive forms. That is, when the always already existing gender and nationally specific *representations* of norms and patterns of behavior fail to correspond the actual *practices*.

MOTHER-RUSSIA AND HER CHILDREN

In order to understand how these discursive and symbolic gaps are being negotiated on the level of the individual, I want to explore a set of textual materials that I collected with Russian high school and undergraduate students (age 15-22) in Barnaul, Siberia in 1996 and 1997. The set consists of three kinds of text:

- The most extensive collection of materials is a series of 142 student essays collected in April 1997, in which the students described their own understanding of two types of notions: (1) ones dealing with *national* identity ("*Nationality*," "*Russianness*," "*Motherland*," "*Russian/Soviet Motherland*," "*New* (i.e., post-Soviet) *Russia*"), and (2) ones concerning *gender* identity ("*Gender*," "*Typical man/woman*," "*Typical Soviet man/woman*," "*Typical New Russian man/woman*," "*Typical post-Soviet man/woman*".)
- Thirty six student reflections on the film *Goldeneye* (1995) collected in April 1996 compose the second group of materials. Having watched the film, the students were asked to describe their attitude to the characters and the situations.
- The last set of materials is five in-depth interviews with the students conducted in April 1997. The length of interviews varies from twenty five minutes to one hour, and the main topics of the interviews were gender and nationalism.

While analyzing the students' essays and interviews, I would like especially to concentrate on three main objects. That is, I want to analyze the way(s) whereby the students define three core notions of post-Soviet Russian national and gender identity: *Motherland*; the *new Russian woman*; and the *new Russian man*. As the thesis will argue, it is by displacing the flexible and/or somewhat absent meaning of the "new" post-Soviet *Russia* onto the figures of the "new" Russian *man* and *woman* that the students could reconcile their national (i.e., "public") identity with their gender/sexual, (or "private") behavior² and thus realize themselves as en-gendered and nationalized subjects. By constructing imaginary notions of the new Russian man and the new Russian woman, by using these personalized forms in order to objectify the on-going changes in Russia, the students, I will argue, were capable of channeling the anxiety and sense of symbolic vacuum caused by the quickly disappearing ideological apparatuses and practices of state socialism.

Such a theoretical and historical analysis is important for several reasons. One – and, probably the most important – of them is a strong tendency in studies of nationalism to analytically separate gender and national identities, to consider them as relatively, or even completely, independent of each other. As Anne McClintock points out, "[t]heories of nationalism have tended to ignore gender as a category constitutive of nationalism itself."³ In that respect, the very concept of Motherland and, as I will show, the symbolic role played by the notion of the new Russian woman in the students' narratives can be

²Parker, A., Russo, M., Sommer, D., and Yager, P., (1992) eds. *Nationalisms and Sexualities*. New York, London: Routledge, p.6.

³McClintock, A. (1991) "No longer in a future heaven': Women and nationalism in South Africa." *Transition*, Vol. 51, p. 120.

used as a perfect example of the explicitly gendered representation of the nation as well as the transformations this nation is going through.

Besides this general theoretical and methodological task, the thesis aims to accomplish more local goals. One of them is the analysis of possible structural reasons that gave the students' essays about Mother-Russia and her new Russian children a stable narrative framework. By exploring the reasons for the students' *symbolic inconsistency* and *binary thinking*, I will show that (contrary to some recent attempts to essentialize certain aspects of the gender and national identity in Russia⁴) the core notions of Russian (male or female) identity are extremely context-dependent and thus lacking in themselves anything that could function as a basis for any ahistorical symbolical construct.

Moreover, with the help of the three groups of materials, several other aspects of gender and national identity construction in contemporary Russia can be problematized. Students' descriptions of the key notions are instrumental in outlining the symbolic frame within which the post-Soviet youth assumes its own subject position(s), limited by changing gender stereotypes on the one hand and destabilized mechanisms of national identification in today's Russia on the other. Simultaneously, these descriptions make apparent the processes of memory construction or, rather, make apparent the imaginary web through which the students perceive their recent past. In turn, students' reflections about a typical example of post-cold war action films put their personal, subjective experience into a broader frame. As the thesis will argue, by accepting or negating the imagery offered by the popular culture, the students, in part, come up with a more or less

⁴See, for example, Rancour-Laferriere, D. (1995) *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering*. New York : New York University Press.

coherent – *instrumental* – understanding of what it means to be a Russian man or woman after the fall of Communism and dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Thus, to put it in the terms of textual analysis, the collected data can help to examine the following aspects of symbolic production of the “new Russian” identity. First, a synchronic, comparative analysis of the students’ narratives will show how unstable and fluid are such cornerstone concepts of national identification as “*Motherland*,” “*nationality*,” “*gender*,” “*man*” and “*woman*” even within a relatively small group. Second, a diachronic analysis of the concepts will demonstrate how this fluidity is mirrored in corresponding gendered notions, such as “*typical*” Russian, Soviet, or New Russian man/woman. Third, an exploration of metaphorical possibilities contained in the students’ reflections on their daily consumption of mass culture – as well as the metaphors provided by the mass culture itself – may help to move us beyond traditional attempts to find the roots of Russian national and gender identity in history, literary texts or folklore⁵ and shift the emphasis onto the current process of identity construction instead.

To summarize, the research questions might be phrased in the following way. On the level of *textual analysis* the main question may be, through what symbolic devices does personal identity realize itself in the essays of post-Soviet students? By grounding my analysis in the metaphors of the new Russian woman and man I will answer this question. The *operational aspect* of the symbolic production may be analyzed by answering this question, what are the (rhetorical) practices whereby the individuals appropriate dominant symbols and images of gender and national identity and make use of them in their personal life? To understand this I will explore the structural (and psychological) effects of

⁵See, Berdyaev, N. (1947) *The Russian Idea*. London: The Centenary Press; Hubbs, J. (1988) *Mother Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

such interpretative strategies as splitting and consolidation, abjection and idealization. The dynamic of the *personal identification process* can be described by the question: to what extent is it possible to see the recently emerged concepts of the new Russian man and woman as identification mechanisms called upon to fill the lack left behind by the disappearance of the previous role-models? I will try to find an answer to this question by using psychoanalytic theories of projection and narcissism. And, finally, within the field of *intertextual investigation* the main issue is to realize what place/relationship the notions of the new Russian man and woman occupy in regard to other dominant economic, political, cultural, etc. symbols. I hope to understand this dynamic by exploring patterns of imaginary consumption as outlined in the students' essays.

THE HIBERNATING IDENTITY

As multiple historical examples have shown, the concept of Russian national identity has never been an easy issue to deal with. From the fifteenth century, when the very idea of the national political – as opposed to religious – unity was actualized for the first time,⁶ Russian identity established itself *ex negatio*, that is, through a process of permanent relational links with entities considered to be opposites. Depending on the situation, to be a Russian might have meant any thing from being “anti-Catholic” and “anti-capitalist” to “anti-Semitic” and “anti-abstractionist.” At any rate, the positive, performative aspect of national identity has always been unclear; the vector of identity was pointed in the “responsive” rather than in the “initiative” direction. In this

⁶Miliukov, P. (1930) *Ocherki po istorii russkoi kulturi* (Outlines of History of the Russian culture). Paris. Vol. 3. Ch. 3.

“responsiveness,” as some authors suggest, it is possible to find the roots of the Russian imperialist aggressiveness and its especial sensitivity toward the Western Other, the Western politics, and the place occupied by Russia within the frame of Western thinking and acting.

Besides this dialogical quality, Russian identity has another aspect strongly dependent on the “external” context, an aspect that can be described as mimicry. A number of studies emphasize the special elasticity of Russian national political and spiritual culture, its borrowing and importing new, alien elements in order to appropriate and domesticate them. Regardless of the results and content, for a long period this borrowing was a prevalent strategy of the constitution of the Russian nation and state. In his recent book on Russian identity, Neumann, for example, summarizes the Russian national political development during the last three centuries in the following way:

the Russian state spent the eighteenth century copying contemporary European models, the nineteenth century representing the Europe of the *ancien regime*, which the rest of Europe had abandoned, and the twentieth century representing a European socialist model which most of the rest of Europe never chose to implement.⁷

This dependence on the Other, this lack of an internal “core,” this “fluidity” of national identity, its “nomadic” nature that allows for drastic changes, on the one hand, and provokes quite visible contempt for the traditions which have already been “invented”⁸ on the other, have provided a basis for describing the Russian identity as

⁷ Neumann, I. (1996) *Russia and the Idea of Europe: a Study in Identity and International Relations*. London: Routledge, p. 1-2.

⁸ Hobsbawm, E., Ranger, T. (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

"immature," "unstable," "developing,"⁹ or, to use a more metaphorical language, as a "Sphinx-like enigma."¹⁰

There is no agreement in the literature in the field as to where these "mysteries" and "enigmas" have come from. Different authors tend to find answers in different areas: some see it in Russia's transitional geographical location;¹¹ other locate it in Russia's religious Orthodoxy;¹² yet others in Russian political Messianism and/or Communism.¹³ However, despite differences in content, the national identification has always been understood as a result of a number of ideological factors exercised by the state ideological apparatuses, to use Althusser's concept.¹⁴ In other words, through the discursively organized and controlled consumption of symbolic production, the state created a manageable mechanism for the reproduction of a desired subject.

It is interesting to note that this semantic instability of national and, consequently, political subjectification, as well as the relational character of this process were reflected on the level of language as well. As some researchers of Soviet political culture and cultural politics have pointed out, during Soviet times, the term "political culture" differed in meaning from its common Western usage in at least two aspects. First, it implied a *dynamic* process, a permanent "elevation" to a higher stage of general and political culture, and, secondly, it always included *behavior* as a necessary component of culture.¹⁵

⁹Kovalevskii, P. (1912) *Natsionalizm i natsionalnoe vospitanie*. (Nationalism and national education). St. Petersburg.

¹⁰See, for example, Vada, K. (1990) "Rossiya v sovremennom mire." (Russia in the modern world) *Kommunist*, Vol. 11, p.19.

¹¹See, for example, Yanov, A. (1987) *The Russian Challenge and the Year 2000*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

¹²Solovyov, V. S. (1891) *Natsionalnyi vopros v Rossi*. (The National question in Russia) S.-Petersburg.

¹³Berdyayev, N. (1947) *The Russian Idea*. London: The Centenary Press.

¹⁴Althusser, L. (1971) *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London.

¹⁵White, A. (1990) *De-stalinization and the House of Culture: Declining State Control over Leisure in the USSR, Poland and Hungary, 1953-89*. London: Routledge, 1990, p.19.

However, it seems to be precisely these two moments (the absence of solid links between the signifier and the signified, and the embodiment of signifying practices through and in behavior) that unite the production of national and gendered subjectivities. I want to point out several moments where the similarities are especially visible. First of all, both identification processes fulfill the same *functional* task of mapping out "reality," of manufacturing socially "recognizable" individuals.¹⁶ Second, both processes aim to secure, to use Michel Foucault's term, the *political* "governmentality" of society: by imposing gender and/or national division onto society, political actors produce a necessary "social" support and localized "context" for their acts, that is, they produce necessary "subjects." Third, both processes function as *ideological* hegemonic practices, as described by Antonio Gramsci.¹⁷ Individuals, having internalized and incorporated available gender/national identities, start unconsciously re-producing them in their everyday life, taking social constructs for "something" *really* existing.

Schematically, it is possible to draw a parallel structure where biological sex, gender identity and gender rituals and practices correspond to the similarly produced phenomena of ethnic/national differences, national identity and national rituals and practices. This conflation of gender and national identity through grammar and important national symbols seems to find its perfect embodiment in the figures of the Russian man and woman. As has been noted, this non-differentiation between the national and the gender identity proves to be quite effective in the realization of the two core processes which are inescapable and necessary for an individual's personal development – namely,

¹⁶Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 16-18.

¹⁷Gramsci, A. (1971) *Prison Notebooks. Selections*. New York: International Publishers. P.333.

the dual process of engendering and ethnicizing oneself. The question, then, is, "what kinds of processes/factors underlie the success and longevity of this cultural construct?"

The answers could be found in the very rhetoric on Motherland and her children, in those partial images that, on the one hand, finally constitute the country as a symbolic place, as a subject of speech and, on the other, produce the speaking subject herself. One of these rhetorical devices is a peculiar connection established between one's place of birth (a "little Motherland," a "land giving birth to someone" – *malaya rodina, rodimaya zemlia*) and personal self-consciousness. It is this connection whereby a geographical location, *locale*, gets transformed into a powerful mechanism of personification and individuation, resulting in a unique type of identity – "identity given by place."¹⁸ Within the frame of object relations theory, it is this strong attachment to the geographical place traditionally depicted in the feminine and/or feminized images¹⁹ that can be seen as an indicator of "hibernated," "not-yet-established" or maybe "not-*quite*-established" identity. Not surprisingly then, that the "awakening" of this identity more often than not was caused by the intervention of what could be called the punishing Other, associated typically with the West, be it Protestantism, Socialism, Fascism, Capitalism, Feminism, or, for example, NATO, or anything that is experienced as coming from outside, as imposing new symbolic and/or geographical boundaries. As a result, this "awakened" identity is always an identity awaiting an external and predominantly negative confirmation of its own boundaries and meaning.

¹⁸See: Murav, H. (1995) "Engendering the Russian body politics." In *Genders*, 22, p.33; also: Suny, R. G. (1993) *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

¹⁹See, for example, Lampland, M. (1994). "Family Portraits: Gendered Images of the Nation in the Nineteenth-Century Hungary". In *East European Politics and Societies*. Vol. 8, No. 2, p.287-316.

Another rhetorical device that closely binds Mother-Russia and her children manifests itself in a family-like concept of citizenship or, rather, nationality²⁰ ("Russia is a family of nations (*narodov*)"; "St. Petersburg is the cradle of the Revolutions"; "Kievian Rus' is the Mother of the Russian cities," etc.). Any rhetorical disassociation from this political "object of primary identification" is therefore portrayed not only as "painful" but as potentially condemnable as well.

The derivative nature of Russian gender and national identity (i.e., its dependence on a more general notion of "Motherland") as well as the identity's blended character (gender + nationality) thus poses an interesting theoretical problem. What happens to the individual's sense of his/her gender and national identity when the previously available forms of representation lose their meaning? To put it another way, when the configuration of the Motherland changes, what does the individual do in order to bridge the emerging gaps?

GENDER IN RUSSIA(N)

Despite the fact that the notion of Motherland has been in the focus of many discussions among Russian and Western researchers, the gender/national duality of this concept has so far escaped any persistent analysis. The key studies in the field tend to be as limited in their thematic span, as in their methodology. For example, Hubbs' *Mother*

²⁰For a detailed, albeit not so gender specific, analysis of production of popular version of patriotism at the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia see Jahn, H. (1994) "For Tzar and Fatherland? Russian Popular Culture and the First World War". In Frank, S. & Steinberg, M., (eds.) *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 131-146.

Russia, one of the first books that explores the notion of Motherland in Russian culture,²¹ while being important as a first attempt of that sort, describes only pre-Revolutionary Russia, thus leaving aside the drastic changes in the content of the concept and in its functional role in Soviet Russia. Moreover, the book is exclusively literary and avoids exploring any non-artistic iconography of the Motherland.

David Rancour-Laferriere's *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering*²² is another important contribution to the attempt to problematize gender and national identification processes in Russian culture. The book tries to interpret these processes within the frame of traditional Freudian psychoanalysis combined with a semiotic approach. This effort to bring a new dimension to the traditional Slavic studies is certainly promising, but for some reason Rancour-Laferriere in his search for the roots of Russian masochism manages to completely avoid all the political dimensions of this phenomenon. Simultaneously trying to discover manifestations of the unconscious in daily habits and folklore rituals, the author apparently tends to essentialize the stability of identification mechanisms. In a vein of the semiotic tradition, the main emphasis falls on finding additional signs of infant-like identity of a Russian. What is left unanswered in this process, is the question of contextually derived meanings of the signs. For example, in Rancour-Laferriere's interpretation, the traditional ritual of confessing the sins to the "mother-earth" rather than to the priest common among the Russian peasants until the end of nineteenth century, is explained as an example of spiritualization, the animation of nature.²³ However, could it be said, for instance, that this "earthy" ritual performed a more

²¹ Hubbs, J. (1988). *Mother-Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

²² Rancour-Laferriere, D. (1995). *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering*. New York : New York University Press.

²³ Ibid., p. 139-139.

simple function – that of a public display and communal binding, for confession in Russia was rarely a solitary act? In other words, can we explain the rituals, as Rancour-Laferriere does, on the single ground of their manifest meanings? Do we need to restore a signifying chain that has led to the final act? Or is a knowledge of the stages of psychic development enough to explain the variety of forms this development might take?

Laura Engelstein in her study of sex, sexual practices and discourses on sexuality²⁴ in Russia tries to avoid this psychoanalytic fundamentalism by seeing the “hierarchy of sexual power and subordination” articulated in Russian discourses on sex as representations “of domination and submission in the larger social world.”²⁵ The book is an excellent example of expanding the notion of sexual practices and gender identities, of not narrowing them down to private behavior. Unlike in a similar study exploring an earlier period,²⁶ Engelstein understands sexuality as one of the social institutions with which the individual must associate him or herself and which itself is embedded in a changing social fabric. To put it differently, sexuality in Engelstein’s book is always only a part of a broader context, its analytical autonomy performs nothing but a function of analysis and thus belongs to the domain of theoretical constructs. The point in question, then, is not about the forms sexuality assumes in a given period, but rather about the place(s) it occupies within a network of other social, political, cultural, economic, or religious relations.

²⁴Engelstein, L. (1992). *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

²⁵*Ibid.* p.1.

²⁶See Levin, E. (1989). *Sex and Society in the World of Orthodox Slavs, 900-1700*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Among the books on gender and national identity construction in contemporary Russia the works of British sociologists of culture Lynne Attwood²⁷ and Hillary Pilkington²⁸ are of special importance. While being sometimes excessively adherent to the clichés and frameworks of structural and functional analysis, the authors however do provide a broad factual picture of sex socialization in conjunction with cultural consumption. In a recent collection of essays on youth culture in Russia, for example, Attwood and Pilkington attempt to trace the evolution of traditional notions of gender identity during perestroika and after. By exploring different cultural scenes and locations, the sociologists continue to destabilize an idea of a homogeneous, or at least coherent, Russian youth culture, and at the same time they further the investigation of a role the cultural institutions play in shaping young people's gender identity.²⁹

In the Russian language literature the theoretical studies of Russian and Soviet mass culture are extremely rare, mostly due to ideological and institutional reasons. The ones that do exist³⁰ present mostly chronological accounts of facts and events, and lack a developed methodological framework. The same flaw is to a certain extent typical for a series of books written or edited by Richard Stites, one of the most active English-speaking researchers in the field of Russian mass culture. His version of the development

²⁷ Attwood, L. (1990). *The New Soviet Man and Woman: Sex Socialization in the USSR*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

²⁸ Pilkington, H. (1994). *Russia's Youth and its Culture: A Nation's Constructors and Constructed*. London: Routledge.

²⁹ Three essays of these authors were published in a collective volume Pilkington, H. (ed.) *Gender, Generation and Identity in Contemporary Russia*. London: Routledge, 1996: Attwood, L. "Young People, Sex and Sexual Identity", (p. 95-121); Pilkington, H. "'Youth Culture' in Contemporary Russia: Gender, Consumption and Identity" (p.189-237) and her "Farewell to the Tussovka: Masculinity and Femininities on the Moscow Youth Scene" (p.237-264).

³⁰ See, for example, a three-volume outline of the history of the Soviet mass song: Uvarova, E. (1976-1981) *Russkaya Sovetskaya Estrada*. Moscow. An English version of a good historical account of Soviet film see in Zorkaya, N. (1989) *The Illustrated History of Soviet Cinema*. New York.

of Russian popular entertainment in the twentieth century³¹ tends to neglect the dialogical nature of cultural consumption; as a result, Russian mass culture is usually understood in his works as an officially produced culture *for* the masses.³²

Hence, as this brief and no doubt incomplete literature review suggests, a theoretical exploration of the role performed by cultural consumption in creating and maintaining a sense of gender and national identity in Russia is a relatively unexplored area. None of the published works make an attempt to see identity as process of oscillation between the national and the sexual; almost none of them see political implications of this core "instability"; and practically all of them ignore a micro-level where socially produced symbols meet personalized demands and desires. In that respect, the analysis of the personalized narratives re-produced by the students in their essays and interviews, which I will undertake in this thesis, helps partially alleviate the indicated problems.

METHODOLOGY

In order to avoid the main flaw of the literature on Russian gender and national construction, that is, its either *purely sociological* – mostly quantitative and structural – or *purely theoretical* – mostly focused on literary and folk-culture texts – approach, I choose to explore the rhetorical possibilities of the students' narratives. While they are written *texts*, the students' essays are not limited by externally imposed rules and standards of literary genres and thus retain a certain element of immediacy. At the same time, while

³¹See Stites, R. (1992) *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³²This is especially visible in the recent anthology: J. von Geldern & R. Stites (1995) *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

being *individually* written, the students' essays contain nevertheless a certain set of common topics, metaphors, and rhetoric devices that allows to analyze them as a collective unit.

One of the problems of such an analysis is certainly the level of its adequacy to the students' intentions. In other words, the question is, "to what extent does the signifier of my interpretation relate to the signified of the students' essays?" While not pretending to establish any mirroring relation between the two types of text production, I want to suggest an interpretative and reading strategy that does not exclude any other hermeneutic possibilities. In the interpretation that follows I will be reading the students' essays as verbal texts that have been produced within a certain social, political, and cultural context; my aim in this respect will be to try to understand to what extent the social frames have influenced, defined, and directed the mode of the students' discursive production.

As I have already indicated, the materials I will be using consist of three main groups: (1) a group of one hundred forty two written answers to the questionnaire; (2) a group of thirty six written reflection on the film *Goldeneye*; (3) and the group of five oral interviews.

First Group of Materials

More concretely, the first group of responses is made up by sixty five male and seventy seven female student answers to the questionnaires (*Appendix 1*). The length of replies varies from one typed page to several lines. As an example I include in *Appendix 2* several translations of the full texts of the interviews. Since I have worked with groups visibly differing in their educational background I mark all the student comments with abbreviations indicating the group; there are five groups all together:

1. "IR" describes 28 students from the Department of International Relations of the Altai State Technical University, Barnaul. There were two groups from this Department: a) 6 second-year female students, 19-21-years old, and b) 7 male and 15 female second-year students, 19-22-years old. These two groups are marked by somewhat higher economic background and usually a good knowledge of English (and sometimes German). Some of the students have been abroad; the majority have an urban background.

2. "Fil" marks two groups of 19 students from the Department of Philology, Altai State University: a) 10 first-year female students, 17-18-years old; major – journalism, and b) 9 first-year female students, 17-18-years old, major – philology. Comments written by these students are the most extensive and coherent. Many of the students have rural backgrounds and their study at the University is their first major urban experience. Economic backgrounds vary, but predominantly the students of this group are from working class and peasant families.

3. "Sch" stands for "school" and is used to indicate responses from 31 high-school students (18 male students, 15-17-years old and 13 female students of the same age). These students have lived almost all their life in the city. The length and depth of their comments vary significantly within the group. The economic background of the students is mostly working class.

4. "Tech" is used to mark the students from the Department of Engineering (Altai State Technical University). The group consists of 23 male and 24 female first-year students, age 17-19. The students of this group are marked by a rather "concrete" approach to the subject. Some of their responses are rather short. Several students chose to answer just one or two questions from the list. Economically, the group is a mixture of students from peasant and working class families.

5. "Avto" stands for the Department of "auto-construction" (Altai State Technical University). The group includes 17 second-year male students, age 20-24. The majority of these students are of rural background; their replies are somewhat short and not so detailed.

Second Group of Materials

The second group of essays consists of comments of twenty female and sixteen male participants on the film *Goldeneye*. In April 1996, several months after the film came out in Russia, I conducted a pilot project with two groups of students from the Department of International Relations at Altai State Technical University (Barnaul, Russia). The same groups of students participated in the survey that I conducted one year later.

The students were shown the film, after which they were asked to write down their reflections about it. There was no fixed format and no direct questions, except for a generally defined request: "Please, write down your impression and ideas about the main characters in the film. Indicate the things and/or qualities that you find the most attractive. If possible, explain, why." The texts of the reflection vary between one and two pages in length.

Third Group of Materials

Five students agreed to take part in oral interviews: four male students and one female student. Except for one male student from the Department of Engineering, all were from the Department of International Relations. The interviews lasted from thirty minutes to one hour. There was no strict format, but I tried to follow the questionnaire that I used

for the written reflections. The purpose of this form of interview was mainly to check whether there would be a significant difference between the written and the spoken answers of the students. As the oral interviews showed, the style, the metaphors, and the main concepts the students used did not differ from the written essays. In the thesis I use this group of materials rather marginally.

In order to make clear the age, gender, and education backgrounds of the students whose texts I quote in the thesis, I use a three-dimensional code, indicating gender (M or F), age (e.g., 21), and one type of the groups described above. Since none of the students is married I decided not to include this information into the coding. Thus, usually the code looks like this: *F-20-ir*, which means the author is a *twenty-year old female* student from the Department of *international relations* of Altai State Technical University.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As has been shown, the construction of gender and national identity in Russia can be problematized through the frames of various discourses. However, the analysis of these phenomena is done predominantly through the structural-functionalist and institutional lens. In my thesis, while using some elements of these still useful approaches, I want to explore methodological possibilities of the frame of analysis offered by a psychoanalytic approach. The emphasis on the personal dynamic of cultural consumption and the possible developmental functions of cultural symbols manifested in these analytic traditions is helpful in examining the students' narratives, as well as in interpreting the mechanisms of their imaginary identification with such figures as the new Russian man and woman.

Among the numerous authors whose concepts I find useful for the purpose of my research project two groups can be easily singled out. One of these groups is linguistically oriented and takes its roots in the structural analysis of texts; this group includes Pierre Bourdieu, Frederic Jameson, and, to some extent, Judith Butler. The other group represents a psychoanalytic approach to texts and consists of the key figures of psychoanalysis – Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva. The main ideas and concepts of these authors as well as my (dis)agreements with them will be spelled out in the subsequent chapters. Here, however, I would like only to briefly outline such key ideas as “dominant fiction,” “historical trauma,” and the “Symbolic order” that I will be using throughout the text.

In her attempt to historicize the concept of phallus,³³ Kaja Silverman develops three theoretical categories: *social formation*, *dominant fiction*, and *history*. While being at first glance somewhat self-explanatory and clear, the categories, nevertheless, have rather peculiar meanings in Silverman’s interpretation.

Following Foucault, Silverman understands “*social formation*” as the “complex, overdetermined and contradictory nexus of discursive practices, in which the human subject is constituted and lives in a relation of absolute inferiority.”³⁴ For Silverman, though, these discursive practices, constituting social formations, cannot be reduced only to those producing meaning. Rather, they are understood as encompassing *all* social activity and exchange. But, unlike in Althusser’s concept of the *State Ideological Apparatuses*, this totality of discourses, this all-unifying social formation does not evolve

³³Silverman, K.(1990) “Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity”. In E. Ann Kaplan. (Ed.) *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. New York: Routledge, p. 110-127.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 115.

around a certain mode of production, nor is it homogeneous in itself. Instead, it is "*the non-unified totality* of discursive practices within and through which the subjects that make up a given socius conduct their *material* existences."³⁵

The second category, *dominant fiction*, is used by Silverman in order to distinguish first between the *constructed* and *illusory* bases of reality, and second, between a number of discourses available in society and their "dominant" versions, i.e., the ones that permit "a group identification and collective desires."³⁶ What is more important in this dialectic of *dominant fiction* and *social formation* is the dependency of "social formations upon their dominant fictions for their very sense of identity and unity."³⁷

The third category used by Silverman is that of *history*. Silverman defines history as a "force capable of tearing a hole in the fabric of the dominant fiction, and so of disrupting its internal economy."³⁸ Later on, she identifies it as *trauma*. By doing so, Silverman certainly recalls Freud's exploration of striving for death and the Lacanian concept of the Real: the domain that intrudes, hurts and leaves its traces in conscious life while remaining unrepresentable and unapproachable. Within this frame, the dominant fiction functions in a way similar to that of Freudian "screen-memory"; however it anchors itself not only in fantasies and other imaginary products but also in the very mechanisms of day-to-day sensory perception. As Silverman indicates, "the protective shield or dominant fiction also orchestrates sensory perception, converting vision and hearing into apparatuses "for the reception of certain specific effects of stimulation"³⁹ In other words, it is in the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

³⁹ Ibid.

body where dominant fiction finds itself, and it is the politics of the body whereby the dominant fiction (as well as social formations) realize their goals.

In her later work Silverman furthers the concept of the dominant fiction. In *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*⁴⁰ she tries first to extend the Freudian (and Lacanian) analysis of an individual's sexual identity formation beyond its strictly personal (or familial) environment, and second to locate Althusser's idea about hegemony and state ideological apparatuses within the domain of the family. As Silverman notes,

When a modified Althusserian paradigm is brought into an intimate connection with psychoanalysis and anthropology, it provides a basis for elaborating the relation between a society's mode of production and its symbolic order. This theoretical model also opens the possibility for understanding how the subject is sexually, as well as economically "captated."⁴¹

To understand how male sexuality is connected, if not conflated, with the dominant ideology, Silverman introduces a concept of "belief." It is crucial for her theoretical construction to locate ideological faith, or belief, "outside *consciousness*, rather than outside the *psyche*." Elaborating Althusser's idea of "ideological practice," she states that

Ideological belief... occurs at the moment when an image which the subject consciously knows to be culturally fabricated nevertheless succeeds in being recognized or acknowledged as a "pure, naked perception of reality."⁴²

Thus, it is hardly the subject's rationality that ideology and ideological belief aim at, but rather the very field of the subject's unconscious, which itself, to recall Freud, "cannot

⁴⁰Silverman, K. (1992) *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. New York and London: Routledge.

⁴¹Ibid., p.15

⁴²Ibid., p.17.

distinguish between truth and fiction.”⁴³ At the same time, the phantasmatic nature of the unconscious functions in accordance with a scenario based upon desires sprung from the Oedipus complex. In other words, the “truth and fiction” of the unconscious – despite all their complexity and ambiguity – can be reduced to the double desires that lie in the core of the imaginary mode of production.

There is one more aspect of ideological fantasy that is essential for construction of the subject’s sexual identity. For this fantasmatic realism is to hide, to disguise a lack, a sense of castration which “is born with language.”⁴⁴ The desire for *objet a* thus is to serve as “a symbol of the subject’s lack.”⁴⁵ And it is fantasy that performs the function of conferring “physical reality upon the objects which stand metaphorically for what is sacrificed to meaning – the subject’s very ‘life’.”⁴⁶ It is important to see here that the lack is not something existing prior to the subject’s entrance into the Symbolic. Quite the contrary, as Silverman suggests. The understanding of the lack’s presence is a product of the “secondary identification,” is the result of an attempt to work out the structure of the symbolic, to glue its elements to the ego. The question remains whether the primary, pre-Oedipal, identification is not subject to the same mechanisms of fantasy and ideological belief as the secondary one. Silverman’s answer tends to be positive. As she puts it,

ideology can so fully invade unconscious desire that it may come to define the psychic reality even of a subject who at a conscious level remains morally or ironically detached from it.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., p.18.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.20.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.23.

And it is precisely articulation of sexual difference that, as Silverman believes, facilitates the appearance of all the other ones.

By giving priority to sexual difference, Silverman tries to problematize the sexual in terms of Althusserian and Gramscian concept of hegemony, replacing the initial idea of class identification with that of sexual identification. The key issue in this replacement is Silverman's idea of the "collective mirror stage," of a dominant (sexual) fiction reflected in the "parental imago," whereby subjects and subjectivities are created. Later on in the book, Silverman describes her concept of the dominant fiction at length. As she writes,

the dominant fiction consists of the images and stories through which a society figures consensus; images and stories which cinema, fiction, popular culture, and other forms of mass representation presumably draw upon and help to shape.⁴⁸

However, Silverman points out, this "bank" of representations operates through defining itself in relation to the Law. What kind of Law then? The Law of symbolic order and mode of production. Quoting Althusser, Silverman explains:

Lacan demonstrates the effectiveness of the Order, the Law, that has been lying in wait for each infant since before his birth, and seizes him before his first cry, assigning to him his place and role, and hence his destination.⁴⁹

As a result of this conclusion, the theoretical construction has three components: *the Symbolic order*, *mode of production* and *the dominant function* through which a subject is simultaneously being introduced into the symbolic, and mediating his/her material experience. While discursive production is the main feature of the symbolic and material

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.30.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.33.

production is the main component of the “real” historical experience, it is “male” and “female” that constitutes the “most fundamental binary opposition” of the dominant fiction, its elementary components.⁵⁰ Working through the narrative of family, the dominant fiction arouses “in the subject conventional Oedipal desires and identifications,”⁵¹ “through which the subject affirms the “reality” of the family and the phallus, as well as the other ideological elements with which they are intertwined.”⁵²

In the main chapters of my thesis I want to follow Silverman’s ideas and explore how exactly, in what discursive forms, and through which rhetorical devices the new Russian woman is “most fundamentally” opposed to the new Russian man. That is to say, I will see *how* the very basic elements of the new, post-Soviet, *dominant fiction* are being constructed in the students’ essays. Besides that, by analyzing the process of this construction I would try to understand the logic of the students’ coping with the *historical trauma*, i.e., to understand *what* psychological needs the emerging fantasies are called upon to satisfy.

Thus, in the first chapter of the thesis (*The World of Words: Coming to Terms*) I will outline the main structural tools the students used in order to construct their narratives. Following Frederic Jameson and Judith Butler, I will argue that these tools were the binary opposites and complementary negation.

In the chapter “*The New Russian Woman: The Fatal Splitting*” I will be mainly dealing with Melanie Klein’s concepts of splitting, projection, and introjection and Julia

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.35.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.39.

⁵² Ibid., p.41.

Kristeva's notion of abjection. The principal purpose of this chapter is to show the rhetorical tools whereby the students cope with the anxiety caused by the profound changes in the country.

I will make yet another structuralist attempt to explain the students' interpretations of the new Russian style of consumption in the chapter "*The World of Things: Inflating Prices*." By modifying Pierre Bourdieu's notions of the "restricted" and the "large-scale" fields of cultural production, I will try to create an analytic scheme to clarify the post-Soviet students' persistent attraction to the status-objects of the Soviet past.

And finally, in the chapter "*The New Russian Man: The Narcissistic Screening*" I will analyze the students' images of the new Russian man within the frame of theory of primary and secondary narcissism as developed mainly in the works of Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan.

By bringing together the analysis of gender and nationality and by using as a primary example a country where traditional "mechanisms" and "technologies" of subjectivation are in a process of flux, I hope to show how the dominant fiction of 'stable' and 'primordial' identity fails to sustain itself and how it masks and disguises its inherent fluidity and vacillation at the same time. In other words, I want to demonstrate how, by creating a feeling of gender and national anxiety in its subjects, the dominant fiction of the new post-Soviet Motherland simultaneously produces an imaginary possibility to arrive finally at the point of what seems to be the ultimate solution of the problem of belonging.

THE WORLD OF WORDS:

• *Coming To Terms*

...we have long ago discovered that a thing which in conscious makes its appearance as two contraries is often in the unconscious a united whole.

Sigmund Freud.¹

During the time of so-called "late socialism" - which is to say, in the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s - there was a joke, extremely popular among the Soviet people.

A patient comes to see a doctor and explains what seems to be the problem.

- "Doctor, - he says, "something strange is happening to me: I have one thing in my mind, I speak about another one, while I do something totally different. Help me, doctor!" Without a pause the doctor replies: "We do not treat Communism."

As a Russian saying goes, every joke is only partially a joke. But despite all the interpretative possibilities that this joke offers, I want to concentrate in this chapter only on one aspect of this disruption between the discursive (the "speech") and the actually experienced (the "conduct"), between the articulated (the "words") and the imaginary (the "thought"). I want to understand how this non-correspondence, or should I say incommensurability, of different realms of existence manifests itself through the symbolic representation of nationality and gender in the students' essays..

¹ Freud, S. (1997) "Contribution to the psychology of love." In Freud, S. *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*. New York: A Touchstone Book, p. 44.

As I will argue in this and other chapters, when such firm personal characteristics as class position and/or political preferences and affiliations are in flux or are irrelevant due to the rapid changes, as it happens now in Russia, it is gender and nationality that function as the lowest common denominator to summarize the person's individual social, political, economic, and cultural experience. The representations of gender and nationality in this respect function as one of the easiest ways to communicate people's social location in terms that are understandable across a large and fluid country.

SIGNS OF NEGATION

When I started this project, my main concern was national rather than gender identity. I was interested in knowing the ways and the symbolic strategies people use in order to explain to themselves and to the community their social/symbolic status and their social/symbolic location. Thus is why I started with a study of the so-called system of patriotic education in post-Soviet Russia, or to put it in a different form – with studying the ways and institutions that are involved in the production of citizenship in Russia. The system of primary and secondary education, the network of the national propaganda, and the institutions of mass culture were my main concern in that respect.

During the initial stage of my research, when trying to define the ways and institutions in which national identity manifests itself, I asked people to describe what they thought (or what they felt) their nationality was about. It came as no surprise that, for the majority of the students I was working with, their nationality was about a *sense* of belonging. As a student puts it – “nationality is a sense of belonging to a certain social group” (m-21-avto).

But what kind of group, then? And again, it was hardly surprising that the main “groups of belonging” were the *Russian men* and the *Russian women*. No doubt, to a large extent the students’ choice of the groups to belong was defined by the grammatical peculiarities of Russian language. For nationality in Russia(n) is an “always already” gendered phenomenon providing the subject with only one out of two available notions – either a Russian *man* (“*russkii*,” “*дóññêèé*”) or a Russian *woman* (“*russkaya*,” “*дóññêàý*”).

Thus, following this grammatical lead, I decided to see what this combination of national and gender identity is about, in what symbolic forms it realizes itself, and what kind of meaning it is assigned. As it turned out, the core notion of this dual identity, its kernel, was the notion that usually gets translated into English as *Motherland*.

In the Russian language, the family-like component of this word is somewhat different and less straightforward than in English. The word “*Rodina*” means rather a place that gives birth, and, as a result of the place’s gender ambiguity, the symbolic representations of the “*Rodina*” can be either masculine or feminine. A feminine version is certainly the most popular one. As a male student phrased it:

- *Motherland is the country, the region where the person was born. And this person has a great passion for his/her Motherland. A crude analogue between the notion of motherland and the notion of Mother might be drawn; but Motherland is a broader notion.* (m-21-avto)

Or there are more peculiar versions of this metaphorical equation of the place of birth and Mother. A female student wrote: “Motherland is something serene, eternal, and irreplaceable. Almost like the mother, but inanimate” (f-21-ir). Thus, in what follows I will try to see in which forms this “*passion for an inanimate Mother*” is realized. In other words, I am looking at the symbolic intersection of the personal, familial modes of (verbal)

behavior with the public ones. To frame it in the form of question, I would like to understand, *how exactly does a son (or a daughter) become a son (or a daughter) of the Motherland?*

But how can this dualistic nature of Russian identity be explained and problematized theoretically? In order to grasp the main structural tools the students used to construct their narratives, in this chapter I will be using the concepts and ideas of structural and post-structural linguistics and literary theory.

The concept of the sign elaborated by Ferdinand de Saussure is very helpful in this respect. In "*The Course of General Linguistics*," Saussure describes the sign as a combination of two elements – the *signifier* (an acoustic or visual image) and the *signified* (the content, the meaning); for example: "*motherland*" as a set of several distinctive and distinct sounds (i.e., the signifier), and "*motherland*" as a particular set of ideas, images, and/or objects associated with this assemble of letters and sounds (the signified). As Saussure points out, the link, the connection between the signifier (e.g., the word *Russian*) and the signified (e.g., concrete patterns of psycho-cultural behavior) is historically arbitrary and is a matter of social conventions.²

There are two important points here. The first of them deals precisely with the way the sign is constructed, which is to say, the signifier bears no responsibility for the meaning that is "attached" to it. In other words, the signifier of the Russian nationality

² It should be noted that Saussure is certainly not original in his interpretation of the dual nature of sign. This phenomenon was already known in the ancient Greece and its legacy is fully reflected in the notion of "symbolon," - a metal token broken into two pieces that are given to both participants of the deal in order to provide them with the justification of their shared, common experience. Unification of two pieces was meant to be the ultimate proof of authenticity of the claim. The expression "a broken seal" is yet another version of the same idea.

cannot determine the signified it will be linked with. The following quotes from the students' essays show variety of the signifiers they used to depict Motherland:

- *Motherland – it is associated for me with forests, fields, rivers, my home. The images of Lenin and Gorbachev emerge too. (m-16-sch)*
- *Motherland – the place where we were born, where we live, and where we die. It is something calm, like home, close, dear, and loved. Motherland – is a home, but slightly enlarged one. (f-16-sch)*
- *Motherland is a place without which everything is abominable. (m-18-tech)*
- *When I see the word "Motherland", I imagine a Slavic woman in ancient clothes who stands in the midst of a meadow, or a field, or a forest. (f-16-sch)*

The questions are, Why does one form of representation become more popular than another? Why do the different and, as I shall show, sometimes contradictory meanings become associated with the same sign?

And this leads to the second point. Saussure does say that the arbitrary connection between the signifier and the signified gets established, solidified and stabilized through social rituals and habits. It is through everyday usage, practice, and repetition that the accidental character of the tie that bonds the signifier and the signified becomes first less visible and then – "natural." However unlike Saussure, I am interested in a situation when this "*institutionalized arbitrariness*" is *not* yet established, or when it has been severely damaged. To use an analogy, I am interested in what happens when one part of the *symbolon* gets lost, or stolen, or faked. In other words, what happens when the semantic arbitrariness of word/meaning connection becomes de-naturalized and subject to communal discussions, re-negotiations, and agreements?

When translated into the terms of my research, this logic of structural linguistics presupposing that the same signifier might be claimed to simultaneously represent different meanings, might assume the form of the following question: What are the discursive mechanisms whereby *private* and *personal* characteristics – signifiers – represent themselves as the public ones? As I will argue, this transformation of a private person (e.g., ‘*a son*’) into a public figure (e.g., ‘*a patriot*’ or ‘*a citizen*’) happens through the process of the *cognitive symbolic inconsistency*. That is, it occurs through an unconscious process of displacement, condensation, and disruption of logical symbolic connections between the signifier and the signified. In what follows I want to show how this symbolic inconsistency was realized in the students’ texts.

In the questionnaire I used during my field research (see *Appendix 1*), I tried to combine two levels of abstraction. One set of questions addressed so-called “universal” characteristics: I asked students to define such notions as (1) ‘*gender*,’ (2) ‘*typical wo/man*,’ (3) ‘*nationality*,’ and (4) ‘*motherland*.’ The other cluster of questions was used to localize the students’ “abstract” and “theoretical” knowledge within the frame of their personal experience. In order to do that, I asked the students to describe (1) ‘*Russian nationality*,’ (2) ‘*Russian*,’ ‘*Soviet*,’ and ‘*post-Soviet*’ Motherland, as well as (3) ‘*Russian*,’ ‘*Soviet*,’ and ‘*post-Soviet*’ man and woman. Such a combination of the questions, as well as a closed, narrative-like type of the responses provided the students with a certain structural frame within which they were (1) to locate their answers as “distinct semantic units,” and (2) to simultaneously coordinate these units in regard to each other.

For example, an eighteen-year old female student answering the question, *How would you describe such notions as "Motherland", "the Soviet Motherland", "the New Russia?"* wrote:

- *"Motherland" can be described as a forest, as a home, as an unlimited space, as a lack of rush. In other words – as repose and peacefulness.*
- *"Soviet Motherland" – I think of it as a collective movement towards a common goal with a strong belief that this goal is reachable.*
- *"New (post-Soviet) Russia" – it is an aimless rush. (f-18-fil)*

I think this quote is a perfect example of what could be called *the cognitive symbolic inconsistency*. Any attempt to connect, to reconcile a universal notion with a personal experience always falls short. Quite seldom is this connection a logically coherent one. Quite seldom is it about gradual advancement of what Gadamer defines as 'horizons' of meaning,³ or explication of the notion. More often than not, we are dealing here with a manifestation of a structural principle that – as Derrida would argue – is basic for any sign. Which is to say, a sign manifests its existence – i.e. it comes to function significantly – only through disruption, through break, through negation, through de-contextualization. Or, in Derrida's words, the writing becomes possible only in the form of "a chain of differential references."⁴

Thus, in the student's quote, we encounter with a series of semantic disruptions. The short narrative about Motherland passes through three stages on the way to its development.

³ Gadamer, H.-G. (1989) *Truth and Method*. New York: Routledge, p. 306.

⁴ Derrida, J. (1976) *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University. p.159.

First, we have a basic equation of Motherland and "*peacefulness*," Motherland and "*lack of rush*." The semantic choice is understandable: "*Motherland-as-repose*" functions here as a zero-point that marks off the beginning of the following movement but at the same time does not determine the direction of this movement. To extend the metaphor, the Motherland here is not just *repose*, but also an "unlimited" *repository* that contains all the necessary elements for future development.

At the second stage, the direction of the development of the narrative becomes clearer. The modifier "Soviet" functions as a semantic break that transforms "*Motherland-as-repose*" into "*Motherland-as-movement*." Thus, a first binary is formed: "*stillness*" vs. "*flux*."

The chain of the "differential references" does not stop here, however. The next step presents a dual negation-supplement. On one hand, the new post-Soviet Russia/Motherland is defined in opposition to the Soviet one, and as a result of that "*the goal-oriented movement*" is replaced by "*an aimless rush*". On the other hand, the same "*aimless rush*" is juxtaposed to the initial "*peacefulness*" and "*lack of rush*." Thus, the chain accepts a form of circuit, and the elements of the narrative can be schematized as follows:

1. "*Motherland-as-repose*": A ;
2. "*Motherland-as-movement*": $(-A)$;
3. "*Motherland-as-aimless-rush*": $(-(-A))$.

The formula of the narrative, then, is: $A \rightarrow (-A) \rightarrow (-(-A))$.

What is interesting here is that the negation is never a *complete* negation: $(-A)$ is not the same as " (A) with a minus," nor does $(-(-A))$ coincide with (A) . Instead of

'complete negation' we have here a 'complementary negation.' The relationship between the opposites, in other words, recalls the dynamic of the Freudian '*denial*' and '*disavowal*,' manifesting the meaning that is not present yet rather than the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, which binds in a dialectic pair antagonistic or incommensurable opposites. Despite the appearance of a logical circuit, there is no *direct* return to the starting symbolic point of the narrative. The "floating" signifier of Motherland travels along the line of various signifieds, without losing its navigatory function. The stability of the acoustic image creates a sense of semantic stability, and, as a result of that, a sense of certain symbolic and social continuity. And this stability of the signifier reflects what seems to be a germane contradiction of any narrative aimed at describing the semantic evolution of the term: a contradiction between a "diachronic" sequence of changes and the "synchronic," static essence of terms being used to grasp these changes. Frederic Jameson, speaking about narrative analysis, points out that

it requires us to explain the imaginative illusion of change, of time, or of history itself, by reference to basic components of the narrative line that are bound to be static.⁵

It is the apparent stability of "*gender*", "*nationality*", and "*Motherland*" that helps students to articulate the changes without getting terminological dizziness. However, it is the logical and semantic inconsistency of the terms' content, or rather consistent negation of any possibility for these terms to assume any permanent meaningful position that counterbalances a petrifying effect produced by the stability of the terms' form in the narratives.

⁵ Jameson, F. (1989b) "The vanishing mediator or Max Weber as storyteller." In Jameson F. *The Ideology of Theory. Essays: 1971-1986*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Vol.2, p.17-18.

This dialectic of form and content seems to be present in the narratives about "gender" as well. A seventeen-year old female student was asked to describe such notions as "gender", "typical man/woman," "typical Soviet man/woman," "typical new Russian man/woman." The student wrote:

- *"Gender" is a set of certain physiological qualities. Neither psychology nor consciousness makes any difference.*
- *"Typical woman". She was beautiful in her youth, but by her middle age she got crude and fat. She is always concerned about her house, and her children. She wants to have better clothes but restrains her desires. She is a perfect cook. She is also a good wife and a good mother who tries to give her all to her children. Her job is a necessary yoke. She is a kind and very sociable person.*
- *"Typical Soviet woman" – unattractive, not famous for her intellect; her house and her children are her main priorities. Even after the fall of the Soviet Union, she still hopes for a good and strong leader of the country.*
- *"Typical New Russian woman" – attractive, refined and wealthy, she likes comfort and luxury, and usually she has it all. (f-17-fil)*

Again, what we have here, is a series of structural complementary negations. Starting with the "somatic" bases of gender ("gender" is nothing but physiology), the student quickly moves on to functional aspects of (female) gender identity (house/children/kitchen); and ends up in the realm of pure symbolic forms (beauty/comfort/luxury). Thus, some of the chain of oppositions/references through which the student inscribes herself into the field of gender can be presented in the following form: *biology vs. social roles vs. representations*:

It is also possible to interpret the logic of the narrative slightly differently:

Gender is given → Gender is taught/imposed → Gender is acquired/chosen.

Schematically, the same stages of the semantic transformation of "gender" (or, rather, "femaleness") might look like this: *destiny → knowledge → commodity*. Thus, the signifier of "gender" (or "woman") in this narrative does not have any stable reference, there is no "essential" quality that could have provided a "core" meaning. Instead, the meaning of the signifier "is generated by its work on previous signifiers alone."⁶

One more example, now about the signifier of nationality. An eighteen-year old undergraduate male student answers the question: *"How would you describe 'nationality,' 'Motherland,' and 'Russian nationality?'"*

- *"Nationality" is defined by the place where people were born (i.e., the territory), by their native languages, by their parents.*
- *"Motherland" – is a place where people were born and spent their childhoods.*
- *"Russian" – is a person with such qualities as modesty, self-respect, and strength. I think, a Russian is not the person who was born in Russia, but a person for whom Russia is the Motherland. (m-tech-18)*

In this case, negation takes on a different form but remains complementary. At first the student undertakes an operation of metaphorical condensation: nationality is equated with place. Having achieved a level of technical operability of the concept, the student makes a series of dis-placements, so to speak, in which *"the place"* is first connected with the childhood *experience* in this place, and then with the personal *qualities* that fit the morale and values of the place. Interestingly enough, the level of abstraction of the notions the student describes and the particular definitions he gives are seemingly

⁶ Jameson (1989c) "Marxism and Historicism." In Jameson F. *The Ideology of Theory...* p. 171.

parallel: a “generic” nationality corresponds to the “generic” territory; while a “concrete” nationality has to be “concretely” embodied.

I think this structural concordance can be seen as a reflection of a more general phenomenon of cognitive parallelism, or rather, cognitive reduction. By symbolically internalizing and translating geography into personal qualities, by appropriating – in the direct sense of this word – the spatial, the student bridges the gap between the abstract and the concrete. To put it differently, the example shows that the universal and the external (“nationality”) become relevant as long as and as soon as they are transformed into personally digestible symbolic forms (“childhood experience,” “individual qualities”). And, as often happens, the output of this digestion has nothing in common with its input.

How can we explain the ostensible hermeneutic freedom with which the students interpret the notions that are supposed to be the core elements of any subjectivity? Could this logical discord be relegated to the realm of personal whims and idiosyncrasies? Or does this inconsistency have a more general nature?

Certainly, logical inconsistency is hardly something unusual or surprising. And yet, the persistence with which the students kept ignoring the gaps among their descriptions as well as the number of the similar cases in the pool of interviews make me think that this inconsistency has its roots in the structure of the symbolic narratives rather than in the peculiarities of the students’ personal development.

I would like to offer two generalized explanations of this phenomenon. One of them deals with the concept of *semantic horizons* developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer and fruitfully appropriated by Frederic Jameson. The second explanation is based on Judith Butler’s idea of an “*anticipated universality*.” Even though both scholars developed their

concepts as theoretical rather than methodological tools, I want to try to see their practical applicability.

In his book "*The Political Unconscious*" Frederic Jameson outlines three semantic horizons, three levels on which the symbolic production takes place.

The first is the horizon of the *symbolic act*, the level of utterance, where the gap between intention and speech is minimized, and close to non-existent. It is so-called individual, "*internal*" speech, where the messenger and the receiver of the message are the same person. While being already "symbolically framed," that is, alienated, the speech act on this stage is not yet devoid of the speaker's idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. To use one of the examples quoted above – it is a specific (verbal) situation in which an alien "place" and a personal "experience" in this place are being conflated and merged, thus producing a symbiotic type of speech that Mikhail Bakhtin calls "*mine-other*" ("*svoe-chuzhoe*").

The second horizon is the horizon of what Jameson calls *ideologeme*. This concept is, no doubt, a Marxist incarnation of Levi-Strauss' *mytheme*.⁷ For Levi-Strauss, mytheme was "the true constituent unit of a myth," the semantic unit that consists of a *relation*. To use an analogy, mytheme can be compared to a "character," to a "personage" in play, where "villain" or "good guy" can realize their symbolic properties only through interaction. Or, getting closer to the object of this project, the notions of "*Russian man*" and "*Soviet woman*," for example, can be seen as performing the same "constituent" function of the myth about historical past and present of Russia as the mythemes studied by Levi-Strauss. For Levi-Strauss, it is precisely through a different organization of semantically stable "mythemes/characters" that different configurations of

⁷ Levi-Strauss, C. (1968) "The structural study of myth." In Levi-Strauss, C. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, p. 206-232.

meaningful/signifying relations are produced, and thus – the myth is modified while keeping appearance of its constancy and consistency.

Jameson transforms the concept of mytheme by bringing in a '*class dimension*' as a structural, and thus a signifying, factor. As a result, the constituent unit, the mytheme, loses its semantic stability and starts manifesting its origin, that is – its belonging to one of the "collective discourses of social classes."⁸ Thus, from the description of the "typical woman" mentioned above⁹ it is possible to make a conclusion about the social location of the person whose semantic horizon produces this type of generalization. In terms of the level of symbolic activity, a personal utterance here transforms into a *statement*, that is to say – it targets a certain (imaginary) audience. And it is enveloped in the symbolic form understandable for this audience.

The third and last level of Jameson's structure of the narrative production is the level of "*sign system*," or as Jameson puts it, a level of the "*ideology of form*," a level of narrative as a closed entity whose general parameters are defined by the "mode of production."¹⁰ To a large extent the concept of the "ideology of form" is close to Silverman's "*dominant fiction*" called upon to mediate the contradictions between the mode of production and the mode of subject's existence. However, while for Silverman the importance of the dominant fiction (and its structure) is connected with the *protective* effect it produces, for Jameson the significance of the ideology of form is determined by its ability to *structurally frame* the subject's symbolic capacity.

⁸ Jameson, F. (1981) *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. New York and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.76.

⁹ "Typical" woman "is always concerned about her house and her children."

¹⁰ Jameson (1981), p.76

A few comments should be made here in regard to the "ideology of form" of my own project. The form of interview or, rather, open-ended survey I used, presupposes a linear sequence of questions and answers and certainly reflects the positions assumed by the interviewees and the interviewer in this process of "socially symbolic" activity. On the other hand, by forcing the students to subdue their opinions to the stylistic conventions they have not chosen, the very same form of the interviewing practice has imposed its own structural limits on their interpretative possibilities.¹¹ From that perspective, my interpretation of the students' answers that will follow certainly cannot be anything other than, as Jameson puts it, an implicit and/or explicit positing of "some ultimate privileged interpretative code" in terms of which the students' texts are being read and thus re-written.¹²

Thus, according to Jameson, the symbolic production has three levels: the level of utterance, the level of statement, and the level of story. The contradictions between the levels, as Jameson suggests, reflect broader social contradictions.

To a large extent this three-dimensional scheme might be useful for interpreting the students' responses. Each of the examples quoted above is marked by structural contradictions among the different levels of abstraction or, to use Jameson's terminology, among the different levels of symbolic production. For example, the *story* of the student quoted above that describes what it means to be a person with a certain gender does not correspond (or coincide) with a *statement* of this student about typical "Soviet woman." Or an *utterance* about personal experience of having a certain nationality (being "modest,

¹¹ It must be noted here though, that structural limits are not the same as semantic constraints, and as far as the content is concerned, the students did have possibility to utilize as many interpretative strategies as they could.

¹² Jameson (1989c), p. 149.

self-respectful, and strong" as being "Russian") differs from a *statement* about the nature of "nationality as such."

It seems to me, however, that this scheme, while being certainly useful for *structuring* the narratives, does not really satisfactorily explain the nature of the emerging inconsequence and discrepancy. For Jameson, these logical contradictions in the personal narrative are the results of the individual's simultaneous involvement in different modes of symbolic (and consequently – economic) production. I tend to believe, however, that the students' essays demonstrate quite the opposite dynamic. That is to say, the contradiction between the framework of the students' *story* and the framework of the *ideologeme* became possible precisely due to the students' *non*-involvement in the particular mode of ideological production corresponding to the level of the "sign system," and to the level of the "ideological form," to the level of the "dominant fiction." Apparently, the imposition of the narrative structure through which ideology produces its subjects does not happen here. The narrative structures of ideology of gender or nationality did not visibly affect the speaking/writing subjects. The famous Althusserian interpellation '*Hey, you!*' does not reach its recipient(s). Or even worse, it reaches them, but the recipients do not recognize the message, replying: "That is not me, you must be mistaken."¹³ Interpellation, devoid of its institutional scaffolding, loses its constitutive power of designative naming, thereby transforming itself into an index to a previously existing disposition of power. In other words, when narrative structures of ideology fail to produce the subjects that they name, they reveal only the power they used to have when they could accomplish such things. The students are able to speak of these categories as incoherently as they do only because

¹³ See: Butler, J. (1997) "*Excitable Speech*": *A Politics of Performativity*. New York: Routledge, p.33.

they don't see themselves in these categories anymore. Or because they use these categories to signify something else.

But how did this *non*-involvement become possible? To a certain extent, the explanation has to do with the institutional flux in the post-Soviet Russia. The ideological production of the Soviet Empire is no longer possible . Each attempt of such a kind would leave too many traces of its conditional and fictitious nature. Each attempt would perform the function of the index laying out a constellation of previously existing power-relations, an archival rather than political function.

At the same time, the ideological production of so-called New Russia is hardly possible now, either – mostly, due to the lack of established “modes of production” and corresponding ideological practices and institutions. The New Russia is simply too new to have such institutions of ideological production stably in place yet. One of the students describes this failure of ideology to produce an adequate subject in the following way:

- *In the beginning we were Russian, then we became Soviet, and now I do not have any feeling for who we are. (f-tech-18)*

Certainly, the absence of the “total” (economic) system whose function is to produce an effect of homogeneity and coherence onto dispersed, fragmented, and local modes of symbolic activity might be one of the major reasons underlying the logical/symbolic inconsistency of the students. However, there might be at least one more explanation of this phenomenon of non-involvement in (or, to put it in Marxist language, alienation from) the dominant mode of ideological production of gender and national narratives.

In her recent book called "*Excitable Speech: a Politics of Performativity*" Judith Butler addresses the same question of potential incommensurability between intention and utterance (not saying what one means), utterance and action (not doing what one says), and intention and action (not doing what one means).¹⁴ Unlike Jameson's attempt to see the cause of this socio-*linguistic* incommensurability of thought, speech, and deed in the socio-*economic* incommensurability of classes, Butler tries to find the reason in the nature of the "ideology of form" itself, that is – in the functional specificity of norms, in the absent referent of the abstract. In her questioning of the Habermasian (and, by implication, Saussurian) idea of "consensually established meaning,"¹⁵ Butler proposes a concept of "anticipated universality," i.e., the "universality whose articulations will only follow, if they do, from a contestation of universality at its already imagined borders."¹⁶

What this version of universality offers is the possibility of understanding any established norm (or form, for that matter), not as a point of destination, but rather as a point of reference understood literally, i.e., as a landmark to move from. Established norms are seen as tools to be used to enter the "domain of speakability"¹⁷ but only in order to be able to change this domain from within. Construed this way, normativity of form (be it "*gender*," "*nationality*" or "*novel*") is doomed to fail when bridging the gap between the "universal" and the "specific," the "typical" and the "personal," the "abstract" and the "concrete." As Butler puts it,

¹⁴ Butler (1997), p.92.

¹⁵ Habermas' notion of "consensual" meaning can certainly be seen as one of contemporary instances of transporting Saussure's concept of sign into the domain of the political. Suffice it to quote the following paragraph: "... the productivity of the process of understanding remains unproblematic only as long as all participants stick to the reference point of possibly achieving a mutual understanding in which the same utterances are assigned the same meaning" (Habermas, J. (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, p.198).

¹⁶ Butler (1997), p. 91.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 88.

the failure of the norm is exposed by the performative contradiction enacted by one who speaks in its name even as the name is not yet said to designate the one who nevertheless insinuates his or her way into the name enough to speak "in" it all the same.¹⁸

To put this in the terms of Jameson's normative structure, the contradiction, for instance, between the narrative about nationality and the ideologeme about *Russian* nationality cannot be resolved by the gradual elevating or explicating of the ideologeme to the level of the narrative: one's sense of his or her own *national* experience would hardly ever be about the territory. Thus, the solution is never about reaching a point of harmony between these two. Instead, it is about a permanent revealing of what Butler calls a "promising ambivalence of the norm."¹⁹ This implies at least two factors in work – on one hand, a clear understanding of the limiting content of the norms; and on the other an ability to assume an external position in regard to these norms. It is in the space between the articulated *knowledge* of the norms and the articulated *reaction* to the norms that the production of subjectivity happens; the production in which "one is still constituted by discourse, but at a distance from oneself."²⁰

This conclusion holds true in regard to the students' comments I have discussed above. Obviously, students have no trouble representing their knowledge of the norms: Nationality, Motherland, and Gender are described in very conventional and traditional ways. The anticipation of the universal is fully present in these answers, the borders of the "domain of speakability" are clearly understood. And yet, these borders are too vague,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 33.

too permeable to prevent the students from inscribing, from bringing the symbolic representations of their own experience into the domain of normativity. As a result, assuming the name (and a corresponding social position) is realized through changing the content of the name; the dominant fiction of gender and national identity fails to impose its meaning on the subject. The typical becomes personalized. The already established signifier is used as a carrier of a new meaning. The *symbolon* gets a new part that looks like the old one, but made from a different metal. The appearance of *symbolic* harmony thus is kept intact. As three narratives show, despite all their logical inconsistency, contradiction and semantic reductionism, they are thought to be describing the same object. Not surprisingly: the stability of the signifier's form produces an illusion of the signified's stability and thus creates a sense of the homogeneity of the story.

THE ATTRACTION OF OPPOSITES

I want now to switch from the discussion of the structural problems of the ideological, or discursive, production of gender and national identity to its semiotic aspects. In other words, I want to show what kinds of ideologemes the students have activated in their essays, what kinds of metaphors they use to symbolically appropriate the rapid changes in post-Soviet Russia.

To explain the formula of the metaphorical activity of students, suffice it to say that their main tool was the construction of semantic opposites, their utilization of the principle of "complementary negation" I described above.

One of the most common ways to represent the difference between the Soviet past and the post-Soviet present, was to prescribe them the opposing *moral values*. Not

surprisingly then, the historical differences are quite often described as differences in behavioral styles. For example, a female student outlines the differences between the Soviet and the New Russian society this way:

- *Soviet Union, – well, there was a certain harmony, even accord. Personally, I think that it was precisely the time when we had freedom. Not freedom of speech or freedom of opinion, of course, but freedom of communication among people; maybe, it was not freedom but rather an absence of fear of other people... Sure, there was a lot of lying and deception, but it did not really disturb people's lives.*
- *New Russia – ...it is difficult to tell, I do not know the old system, this is why I do not see the difference, but my associations are with violence, tactlessness, and insensitivity. (f-17-fil)*

Despite the claim about not being to tell the difference, the difference is clearly pointed out. A structural opposition here could be expressed as “*absence of fear vs. violence*” or, in a more generalized form, “*a cozy community with minor imperfections vs. a flawed community.*”

Another version of this juxtaposition of two systems can be seen in a form of the dichotomy “*cozy community of people vs. greedy individuals.*” A female student writes:

- *The Soviet man and woman were marked by their collectivism and conservatism; but at the same time – they were industrious people who built the Soviet Union and aspired for a “bright future.”*
- *The New Russian man is a selfish, egotistic, and blind businessman. The New Russian woman is the wife of a new Russian man. She is conspicuous for her coldness and aloofness. (f-17-fil)*

Some students gave totally opposite descriptions of the same people. (After all, some of the Soviet men and women are the same people who have become new Russian men and women.) However, despite the content, the polarity of the opposites that represent different types of personal agency is still kept intact. A 17-year old female student writes:

- *The Soviet man is a lazy, swearing drunk, who is also irresponsible and unable to provide a means of existence either for himself or for his family.*
- *The New Russian man is a person who has found in himself the strength and courage to challenge the shortcomings of Soviet life. He has his own business, a stable income, and a family, for which he has no time. He spends all of his time making his life better. His cultural level is not so high because he is still searching for his identity. (f-18-tech)*

The interpretative strategy employed here is familiar indeed: political, economic, and social changes are translated into the terms of personal behavior and economic self-sufficiency (or a lack of it). Thus, a “lazy, swearing” Soviet “drunk” is to mirror a strong and brave new Russian man exploring possibilities of economic and identity transformation.

A certain number of students perceive this breaking of the unified collective whole into the “pieces” of singular persons merely in terms of appearance. To some extent, this process of “individuation,” of “*privatization of the self*” is thought of as becoming visible, i.e., becoming publicly addressable. Ironically enough, the privatization of the self more often than not is a privatization for the sake of others. To be “individual,” in other words, is to be recognized by the public. The easiest way to obtain this recognition is to produce an aesthetic (or stylistic) disruption. A seventeen-year old female student writes:

- *Soviet people did not care about their appearance. As the official Soviet ideology put it, the proper Soviet people should devote themselves entirely to their spiritual development only. They were people who did not like their jobs but who were absolutely sure about stability of their future.*
- *A new Russian man? I imagine a man in a long stylish coat with a pager – not because he needs that but solely in order to show himself off. These people are absolutely sure that each and every person should be admiring them...(f-17-fil)*

A male student gives a different version of this binary “*spiritual and internal* vs. *material and external*.” In his version it transforms into “*unobtrusive* vs. *conspicuous*” and “*meekness* vs. *conceit*.”

- *A Soviet man is a person in a gray suit, with a miniscule salary, who is constantly thinking about how to cope with the shortages.*
- *A new Russian man is a guy in a crimson suit with a huge golden chain around his neck, sitting in the 600th version of a Mercedes. He has a pile of US dollars that he spends without thinking. (m-17-tech)*

The change of color scheme (*gray* vs. *crimson*) implies a more profound metamorphosis of “shortage” into “abundance,” and, consequently, “thinking about spending” into “spending without thinking.”

There are, of course, many ways to explain this special attention to appearance. And one of them might have something to do with the physical availability of goods. At the same time, it seems to me that this preoccupation with the look, or rather with the desire to be noticed, has been caused to a large extent by the same desire to produce a symbolic gap, or what Pierre Bourdieu has called “distinction.” In other words, the

formation of subjectivity, as the formation of the sign, is possible through separating, through breaking away from the context. One of the students bluntly pointed out this “disruptive” nature of individualism. As she writes:

- “*The soviet man and woman: these people like to hide in a crowd, they are lacking individualism.*” (f-22- tech)

In my view, the most interesting set of binaries describes differences in another kind personal conduct: in the conduct of sexual behavior. Various comments and comparisons made by the students basically can be reduced to two main pairs. One is a traditional general juxtaposition of “*Man vs. Woman.*” The other binary is more historically specific and relates to the “realm of pleasure;” it can be expressed as “*Soviet sexual Puritanism vs. post-Soviet sensual indulgence.*” I will start with the more general one.

As it is shown in the Table 1, usually students come up with a pretty traditional description of generic/typical “man” and “woman.” The *anticipated universality* certainly does its work. The oppositions are common – “*wildness vs. kindness,*” “*power vs. beauty,*” “*rationality vs. feeling,*” “*silence vs. eloquence,*” etc. An interesting metamorphosis happens when the students describe the people they really know – that is, the *Soviet* or new *Russian* men and women. Instead of further explication of the “norms,” the students almost universally demonstrate what Jameson calls in a different context a “structural permutation in the narrative form or trope.”²¹ Some of these permutations are presented in the Table. Here I want to explore their more descriptive versions. The typical

²¹ Jameson (1989c) p.155.

approach might be represented by the following comment of a twenty-year old female student.

- *The Soviet man is a weak, helpless person without strong character, who never takes an initiative... The Soviet woman is a direct opposite to that. (f-20-ir)*

Another female student develops the same binary of “weak vs. strong” using size as a metaphor:

- *A Soviet man is a hardly noticeable, tiny, and weak human creature.*
- *A Soviet woman is a huge female dressed in cotton clothes, with enormous grocery bags, and with her soul calling her out to the kitchen garden. (f-17-tech)*

The same approach of opposites works in regard to the new Russian couples as well. However, the dynamic of the relation is different. A female student describes it in this way:

- *A new Russian man – is a man who knows how to earn good money. A new Russian woman – his wife – is a woman who knows how to spend the money earned by her husband. (f-17-fil)*

A male student employs the same idea of the polarity of genders but from the point of view of style.

- *A new Russian man is a stocky guy with a crew-cut, wide forehead, and a bul like neck. He is arrogantly self-confident and insolent, in a leather jacket.*
- *A new Russian woman is an independent, beautiful, cunning, and sexy person. (m-22-avto)*

All these examples are convincing enough to suggest that the notion of “gender” is used here to stand for something rather different than just biological characteristics. As Teresa de Lauretis rightly points out, gender is about representation, or rather, “gender is the representation of a relation... between one entity and other entities,”²² between an individual and a class, between an individual and an ethnic group, between an individual and his or her historical past.

One of the ways the students used to describe this historical dimension of gender was through the activation of the binary “*Soviet sexual Puritanism*” vs. “*post-Soviet sensual indulgence*.”

A typical Soviet family is usually condemned but nevertheless looks quite ideal. A female student describes it this way:

- *The Soviet man and woman are indistinguishable. They share the following qualities: taking care of their children, working for the well-being of the state, being patriotic, and avoiding free love.*²³ (f-18-fil)

In contrast, the New Russia and new Russians are understood as a site of sin. A male student writes:

- *The New Russia is about vulgarity, corruption, worshipping money, lack of education, bad manners, insensitivity, wealth, luxury, lying, larceny. The New Russia is about wearing golden chains around one's ankles!* (m-19-ir)

²² de Lauretis, T. (1987) *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.4.

²³ One would certainly wonder if there is anything specifically Soviet in this type of family.

In a less alarmist version the juxtaposition of "*docile modesty vs. sinful decadence*" accepts a form of opposite "*order vs. freedom.*" A female student puts it this way:

- *A Soviet person is a person with a strong sense of rules; s/he is a rigid person closed in on him/her self, the one who strictly follows certain principles and has a lot of psychological complexes.*
- *A new Russian person is a person liberated in all aspects. To some degree this liberation is even good. (f-18-tech)*

It is no wonder that the epitome of this juxtaposition of the *Soviet sense of rules vs. post-Soviet liberation* is a juxtaposition of the *Soviet woman vs. the New Russian lady*. Describing a difference between these two types of woman a seventeen-year old female student writes:

- *A Soviet woman is a meek, hard-working gray mouse, educating her children in the Communist faith.*
- *A New Russian woman is a lady [this English word was used in the Russian text. – S. O.] who has forgotten about her natural duties and lives only for her own pleasure. She is very polished and very confident. Nothing can scare her in this life. (f-17-fil)*

A male version of this couple of the "*faithful mouse*" and "*lady basking in pleasure*" is somewhat different in content but maintains the same idea:

- *The Soviet woman is forgiving, kind, and patient.*
- *New Russian woman is wanton, conspicuously dressed, stupid and even dumb. She is attractive but immodest and debauched. (m-15-sch)*

Another man sees the difference in terms of “power-seeking vs. pleasure-seeking” instincts:

- *The Soviet woman always tries to occupy a higher social status. She likes to control men, she takes from them their initiative, leaving them to be a small screw in the big machine of her ideas.*
- *The new Russian woman is chasing after European fashion, drinking and smoking all the time. She falls on each and every man who wants her. (m-17-tech)*

One certainly does not need to have a wild imagination to detect in this dichotomy a familiar, albeit a modified, pair – a *Soviet virgin* vs. *post-Soviet whore*. There is, however, some kind of *symbolic* division going along the lines of *gender* division in society. It seems that the female respondents tend to interpret this *virgin* vs. *whore* binary differently than the male ones.

For many female students it is the new Russian man who personifies the corrupting influence of coming capitalism. As one female student puts it, “*he is a rich womanizer... who constantly thinks only about himself and enjoys without limits.*” Under these circumstances, woman has nothing else to do but to surrender with minimal losses. A typical female narrative goes like this:

- *The life of a new Russian man consists of endless work, fully immersed in a sea of lying, fraud, debauchery, and luxury.*
- *A new Russian woman is a woman who sold her freedom, her chance to be truly loved one day (to be loved in the Russian way!). In order to get good food and clothes they agree (in their soul, of course) to put up with the unfaithfulness of their husbands. (f-18-fil)*

In contrast, male students see the socio-economic and cultural transformation quite differently. A woman who used to be "*a friend, comrade, and brother*,"²⁴ (m-18-tech) became "*a knot of debauchery*" (m-19-ir). She does "*nothing*" in life but it is she on whom the "*pleasure of man is dependent*" (m-17-sch).

Thus, several conclusions might be drawn from this discussion. First of all, as I tried to show throughout the chapter, the students demonstrate a rather contextual, relational understanding of the notions that are thought to be in the core of one's national and gender identity. While certainly having no doubt about what the notions *are supposed* to mean, the students use them to carry very idiosyncratic meanings. This ability of the students to disregard, to overlook the *content* that the structure of the dominant (national and gender) fiction is trying to impose on them, that is, their ability to exploit the language without actually being subject to it, indicates a rather peculiar location of the students in regard to the domain of the symbols. I will discuss this issue at length in the following chapters; suffice it to say here that the students' essays clearly manifest one strong tendency to use binary opposites as the main tool of the narrative construction. To put it another way, the approach to the narrative is more focused on the instrumental aspects of story telling rather than on its story-line: the opposites can change their places but they seldom get synthesized. The opposites can negate each other but they rarely negate each other to the point of annihilation. The structural difference seems to be more important than narrative consistency.

²⁴ The expression is a pun on a commonly used Soviet cliché stating that under Communism "each person will find in everyone a friend, comrade, and brother."

By using structuralist and post-structuralist approaches in this chapter I was able to a certain point to clarify the logic of cognitive inconsistency of students' narratives about gender and nationality. The post-structuralist idea about the disruptive nature of the sign might explain the persistence of the students' binary thinking. The loose or variable connection between the signifier and the signified indicated by linguistic structuralism is clearly reflected by the migrating meaning of the core concepts of gender and nationality. And, the unattainable character of the anticipated universality of norms is fully manifested in the multiplicity of local deviant versions of gender and national identity. However, what these approaches fail to explain is why the feminine – or female – occupies such a pivotal position in the symbolic production of gender and nationality. Why is the idea of the feminine called upon to symbolize anything from a geographic place to a social and economic condition? The structural analysis of narrative did not provide me with answers to these questions. But, I want to finish this chapter with a quote that indicates a likely path to follow. A female student wrote: *"I think the expression "new Russia" might be understood as "the country in chaos." And yet, this notion gives me hope"* (f-21-ir).

One certainly needs a psychoanalyst, or at least a psychoanalytic approach, to understand how this chaos can possibly produce a pacifying effect on the Russian soul.

THE NEW RUSSIAN WOMAN:

•• *The Fatal Splitting*

...the difference between [the] mother and the whore is after all not so very great, since at bottom they both do the same thing....

Sigmund Freud.¹

The new Russian woman? She is the one who chases after European fashion, who drinks, smokes, and falls on each and every man who wants her.

A student (m-17-tech).

Capitalism in Russia maybe has not made a lot of progress yet, but there is at least one area where the IMF's desire for a "diversified" and "decentralized" economy has become visible. During last eight or nine years, thousands of tiny kiosks have flooded the streets of Russian cities, towns, and even villages, selling everything at once – from canned vodka to Taiwanese versions of Versace ties; from a bootlegged copy of a latest Hollywood blockbuster to a fat-burning belt. This mass eruption of private business is not only visibly conspicuous, but quite loud, too. Almost every kiosk is equipped with a sound-blaster system broadcasting the musical preferences of its owner(s). When in April 1997 I came to Barnaul, my Siberian home town, to do field research, the kiosks that mushroomed in a bus station seemed to have been especially attracted to one song. Following a clear-cut rhythm of tango, a low, husky female voice with a Baltic accent, sang:

*Why have you forgotten me?
Why do you have no pity for me anymore?
I am out on the Piccadilly Circus,
With a shawl thrown on my shoulders...
Back in the past, looking at my eyes,*

¹ Freud, S. (1963a) "Contributions to the psychology of love." In Freud, S. *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*. New York: A Touchstone Book., p.45.

*You used to stroke the collar of your fur-coat,
While your lips were trying to find my lips...
And all the rest that was not supposed to be looked for...*

*The fiddles worked hard all night
And the smoke of cigars swam around.
I kept giving you the gifts of my smile
While my tears were washing away my make-up...
I speed up down the Piccadilly Circus...
But when you loved me I did everything wrong.²*

There was a certain irony in this combination of a kiosk, painted in dirty green, with metallic bars guarding it from burglars, on one hand, and an aestheticized musical version of the IMF's motto: "Everything for sale," on the other. And yet, at least from a linguistic point of view, everything was consistent – in Russian the 'fallen (*ĩäðäý, padshaya*) woman' is synonymous to the 'sold out (*ĩðĩäðäý, prodazhnaya*) woman.'

During my talks with students this close connection between capitalism and prostitute/prostitution became even more visible. The following comments describing the "New Russian woman" were very common. A seventeen-year old female student majoring in journalism writes: "A new Russian woman is a woman who made a profitable deal. She marries not the man but his money." Another woman adds to this "profitable deal" a value dimension: "A new Russian woman has no moral principles; she knows no love and no devotion; money is her only Lord" (20, ir). A seventeen-year old male student with a technical background sees the new Russian woman as the one "who chases after European fashion, who drinks and smokes and falls on everyone who wants her." Yet another female student seemingly summarizes the point:

² Music is written by R. Pauls, lyrics by V. Peleniagre.

- *A new Russian woman is a woman who sold her freedom, her chance to be truly loved one day (to be loved in the Russian way!). In order to get good food and clothes, they agree (in their soul, of course) to put up with unfaithfulness of their husbands. (f-18-fil)*

In what follows I want to explore the rhetorical limits of this idea of the new Russian woman selling her freedom. The woman who is, as a male student puts it, "wanton, conspicuously dressed, stupid and even dumb;" the woman who is "attractive but immodest and debauched" (m-15-sch). My main question is, why does this "indiscrete charm" of capitalism with all its "corrupting" and "corroding" effects find its personification in the (new Russian) woman? In order to do that, I will use the psychoanalytic concepts of splitting, projection, interjection, and idealization developed by Melanie Klein and concept of abjection developed by Julia Kristeva.

THE SIBERIAN PICCADILLY CIRCUS

The title of the song quoted above, as well as the title of the concert with which the Latvian singer Laima Vaikoule toured around the former Soviet Union, was straightforward - *"I am out on the Piccadilly...."* The name of the British intersection is no accident here. Nor is the somewhat "foreign" ("Baltic") accent of the singer. In the popular Russian vision of the West, the Piccadilly Circus together with its continental counter-point - Place Pigale - has become *the* epitome of a dissipated life, female licentiousness and corruption. This example of the inverted Orientalism of the "capitalist" peccadilloes serves no doubt to counterbalance the view of prostitution conceived in

Russian classical literature. It suffices to mention two main examples – Sonya Marmeladova in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Katusha Maslova in Tolstoy's *The Resurrection*. In a simplified form, the discourse on (female) prostitution created by these authors frames it between a woman's voluntary sacrifice of her own body in order to save her beloved man (Dostoevsky), and a woman's forced "sale" of her body, having been seduced by a dishonest and wealthy man (Tolstoy).

While the concept of (woman's) intentional bawdiness was reserved for the West, the same phenomenon in Russia was disguised as a "stolen purity," "lost innocence," or, at least, a "forced surrender." In the beginning of the 1990s, several years before the Piccadilly Circus became part and parcel of the symbolic landscape of the salespersons in the kiosks, another hit song had tried to adapt the traditional view of Russian woman's virtue to the then-existing circumstances. In the song, framed as a ballad with a slight hint of Gregorian chants, the woman confessed:

*You spoke tender words to me but my soul was empty,
Everything passes by unnoticed, as someone else's pain...
Please, let me forget you...
As a bird in the sky you hurry to see me
But in my dream, we are burning, again ...
And you give me the gifts of your tears...
Let yourself drown in my tears, then...
I just acted out this role right in front of you.³*

By counter-balancing the "empty-souled" encounter with the purifying and punishing "fire of the dream," the song apparently tried to play down the old idea about unavoidable punishment for the "sins of the flesh." Having displaced the *retribution* into the domain of the imaginary, the song moved the "*encounter*" into the same register too.

³ The music and lyrics are written by the members of the band "*Letnyi sad*."

As a result, the *act* became a performed *role*, an acting-out, a "forced surrender" that has nothing to do with *real* intentions. And the prayer-like melody of the song was to represent the original innocence of the "soul" that had to *act* as, to *pretend* to be "empty."

As similar as they are, the two songs differ drastically from each other in one aspect. Behind the opposition the "*wild West*" vs. "*subdued East*" there is yet another one. It seems to be the *public* vs. *private* binary that rhetorically creates different models for displaying sexuality (and/or femininity?) or the lack of it. To (imaginarily) act out a "role" in front of a single (male) spectator seems to be all right. In order to act out the same role publicly, i.e., in front of more than one spectator at a time, one needs to go at least to the Piccadilly Circus. The danger of public seduction (or is it a display of the primary seduction's result?) must be geographically displaced. The woman who openly walks down the Piccadilly Circus is doomed to have a foreign accent.

It seems to me that this proposition works in an inverted form, too. An anxiety caused by "geographical" vulnerability, by removed or modified borders and frontiers, leads to its displacement onto someone else's body. To phrase it metaphorically, the more easily the Piccadilly Circus becomes a part of the local scenery in a remote Russian town, the more foreign the girl next door starts looking. In that respect, the phenomenon of the "new Russian woman" is a perfect example of people's attempt to adjust themselves to the emerging political, economic, cultural, geographical, etc. boundaries in contemporary Russia by projecting onto the women "next door" aspects of foreignness, by turning her into a walking flagpole indicating the beginning of an alien, unfamiliar territory.

In a sense, the very notion of the “*new Russian*” woman is called upon to signify, to mark off everything that has been missing in the Soviet reality.⁴ A female student, who, as she puts it, has “many friends among new Russians,” gives the following taxonomy of the “new Russian women,” implicitly indicating the patterns of behavior that were completely unavailable for the “old” (i.e., Soviet) Russian woman. Thus, in the student’s essay, the “new Russian woman” is:

- (a) *the wife of a new Russian man who stays at home and does nothing;*
- (b) *a woman who has her own business and who is successful in it;*
- (c) *a woman who is good in “presenting” herself; one who is dressed tastefully;*
- (d) *a new Russian man’s daughter who studies in a Russian university, and later – in a prestigious place abroad; (these women are often disliked in the collective);*
- (e) *a mistress of a new Russian man. (f-17-fil).*

The new Russian woman thus symbolically (as well as very physically) represents a sharp watershed between the Russia of state socialism and the Russia of the period of the so-called “market reforms.” Compulsory employment during socialism made it possible only for the handicapped and retired to “stay home.” In the new Russia, women have this option, particularly if their husbands earn enough in the new (open, gray or black) market economy to support them. Under socialism, opportunities for “success” in women’s “business” were limited by such forcefully feminized (and underpaid) areas of the state-owned economy as textiles, education, or health care, for example. But now a new class

⁴ As I will show later, this dynamic is not common for the notion of the “new Russian man” whose descriptions are pretty much unequivocal. In this case the anxiety is displaced on to the objects surrounding the man.

of female entrepreneurs is visible. Rare moments of “tasteful self-representation” usually were evidence of a temporary victory in the exhausting fight against a “consumer-oriented industry” that produced uniformity and erased differences. But now, personal style is a matter of self-construction in an economy that features more choices and more goods. And finally, “prestigious” places of education abroad were available for a limited number of children of the party *nomenclatura*, while having a mistress or being a mistress was a traditional item on the agenda of the local organizations of the Communist party which saw “adultery” as one of the main obstacles on the way to the victorious advancement of the principles of “*The Moral Codex of the Builder of Communism*.” Now, international educational opportunities for children as well as the possibilities for men to afford to have more than one woman in their keep are more broadly available. The new Russian woman represents all of these new options.

Remarkably, in her description, the student quoted above touches upon almost all spheres of personal life: family and job, career-motivation, self-image, children, and a certain version of privacy. However, all these characteristics have at least one unifying feature – their explicit or implicit reference to the public domain: either by being presented as explicitly opposite to it (e.g. the woman who stays at home), or by being presented as a justification of new publicly visible practices that hardly existed before or were “officially condemned.” Besides, all these incarnations or personalities of the new Russian woman imply a public scene on which to act out the assumed/imposed role. All of them presuppose the reaction of a really existing or imaginary audience, of the “outer” world: be it a business-environment (b. in the student’s answer), a hostile collective (d.), or an appreciative circle of friends (c.). This “public” component does not become any less conspicuous even when the role clearly implies distance from the public scene (a.). In a

situation where the majority of women are – now “voluntarily” – working in order to get through the “period of transition,” such a withdrawal from public life is remarkably and publicly salient. Even an ostensibly private matter (e.) does not escape the moral gaze of society; describing this role, the student uses a word “*mistress*,” which in Russian is much closer to “*concubine*” than to “*lover*,” implying a degree of public institutionalization.

It must be pointed out that among the students’ essays this kind of detailed elaboration of the notion of the new Russian woman is rather exceptional. Certainly, this multi-faceted vision of the phenomenon has a lot to do with the particular student’s familiarity with the new Russian milieu. For the overwhelming majority of the students who participated in the survey, this milieu belongs to the realm of fantasy rather than to practical experience. The farther the students are removed from day-to-day encounters with the new Russian woman/women, the more improbable the descriptions of her become, or – to frame it metaphorically – the stronger her foreign accent may sound. For example, a female student trying to emphasize non-ordinariness of the new Russian woman, describes her in a following way:

- *A New Russian woman is a lady [this English word was used in the Russian text. – S. O.] who has forgotten about her natural duties and lives only for her own pleasure. She is very polished and very confident. Nothing can scare her in this life. (f-17-fil)*

Sometimes the image of this *lady* clearly reminds the cliches provided by *Dynasty*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, or *Santa Barbara*. Thus, a student writes:

- *The new Russian woman is a new Russian man’s wife; not working, she only delivers pleasures to her husband; she does not take care of her house for she*

has servants. She plays golf and swims in the pool built next to her house. (m-15-sch)

Within the symbolic frame of this student it is certainly irrelevant that the pool built next to the new Russian woman's house will be frozen at least seven months a year, or that the closest golf course is as close as Moscow. For the image performs a function of representation in which its connection with "reality" is a question of secondary importance. In a sense, students understand this rather distant origin of the image of the new Russian woman. In these cases, the students' inability to clearly locate the new woman's position within the symbolic frame gets expressed or, rather, associated with the new Russian woman's personal qualities. As a result, the unstable meaning of the new Russian woman's image is found in her non-transparency, hermeticity, remoteness. A female student reflects this tendency fully in the following comment:

- *The new Russian woman? She is the new Russian man's wife; she is remarkably aloof, cold, and indifferent. (f-18-fil).*

Seemingly, with varying degrees of complexity, the students of both genders reflect in their commentaries the fact that the notion of the 'new Russian woman' remains a sign that indicates a certain disruption, a certain tension in the students' symbolic realm. The sign of the new Russian woman indicates a certain blank spot in the fabric of the "dominant fiction," a fiction that consists of "images and stories" and whose function usually is to provide a society with symbols of more or less universal consensus.⁵ The question now is, why is this rupture "personified," why is this symbolic gap rhetorically equated with the (image of) new Russian woman? To put the same question in the terms

⁵ Silverman, K. (1992) *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. New York: Routledge, 1992, p.30.

of yet another concept of Kaja Silverman, why does the *historical trauma*, which manifests itself in the interruption and de-constitution of what "society assumes to be its master narratives and immanent Necessity" and which is designed "to undo our imaginary relation to the symbolic order, as well as to the other elements within the social formation with which this order is imbricated,"⁶ find its expression in multiple metaphors of woman?

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the structuralist and post-structuralist approaches to the analysis of the students' texts, while helping us understand the internal rules and limits in accordance with which the narratives are being constructed, prove to be insufficient for explaining the content of the students' stories. To understand the possible psychological reasons for the symbolic prevalence of the image of (the new Russian) woman that is so vividly present in the students' comments, I want to explore theoretical possibilities of a psychoanalytic approach to the formation of the individual in his or her interaction with the environment.

However, I do not really want to follow the path paved by Silverman. That is, I want to see whether it is possible to interpret the preoccupation of the students of both genders with the notion of the new Russian woman without reducing it to the symptoms of castration anxiety. In other words, my intention is to understand whether the historical trauma is always and necessary connected with the register of the Symbolic order, as Silverman claims it. Or it might be displaced onto a different, earlier stage of the Imaginary.

There are at least two major reasons for doing this type of analysis. I mentioned one of them already, i.e., based on the materials I have it is impossible to speak of any

⁶ Ibid., p.55.

significant gender differences between male and female students in perception of the new Russian woman. The metaphors, the types of binaries and juxtapositions used in the male and female students' descriptions do *not* meaningfully differ between themselves. In that respect, the familiar figure of castrating *femme fatale* is hardly instrumental for my analysis, as is the very notion of the phallic power and connected with it castration anxiety.

There is a second reason that influences my decision to explain the students comments from the point of the Imaginary rather than the Symbolic. As I will show in this and especially in the two following chapters, the students chose to cope with the historical trauma in a very unusual way. Being unable to establish solid connections between new post-Soviet signifiers and new post-Soviet signifieds, they resorted to recycling the signifiers of the previous Soviet period in order if not to express than at least to manifest the possibility of new meaning. To put it differently, instead of learning the new language of the new epoch and thus successfully re-entering the Symbolic, they prefer to remain limited by the language they know better.

Thus, while using Silverman's concepts of dominant fiction and historical trauma, I would like to focus on the primordial influence of the oral (not genital) phase with the omnipotent "breast" (not phallus) as its main acting and signifying figure. Obviously enough, such a choice implies a theoretical frame somewhat different from Silverman's. Therefore, while keeping in mind the Lacanian troika of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real on which Silverman bases her analysis, for the purpose of my research I will be using the psychoanalytic concepts developed by Melanie Klein.

SIGNIFYING THE (W)HOLES

Several comments need to be made before I begin to interpret the students' views on/of the new Russian woman. The most important of these comments concerns the topology, or rather the topography, of the question "What is a (new Russian) woman?" The issue is, does this *question* or, rather, the *responses* to it, belong to the realm of the Imaginary, i.e., that of meaning, the signified; that of the phantasmatic identification; i.e., to the realm where the ego has not yet established itself within the socially provided boundaries? Or we are dealing here with the realm of the Symbolic, i.e., that of the signifier, the realm where the linguistic exchange and communication within a community happens?

Since the result of this "diagnostic" topography will define to a large extent the trajectory of my interpretation, I think it is necessary to pause here in order to make a clearer distinction between the *neurotic* forms of fantasy (e.g., hysteria, the compulsive obsessions) and *psychotic* (e.g., paranoia, schizophrenia) forms of fantasy.

In his most extensive work on paranoia Freud indicates that what distinguishes this type of illness from other kinds of neuroses is not "the father-complex" or "the wishful phantasy." In other words, it is not the content or the intention that differentiates the fantasy of the neurotic from that of the psychotic. Instead, as the psychoanalyst writes,

The distinctive character of paranoia ... must be sought for elsewhere – namely, in the particular form assumed by the symptoms.... ...[in] the mechanism by which the symptoms are formed or by which repression is brought about...⁷

⁷ Freud, S. (1911) "Psychoanalytic notes on autobiographical account of a case of paranoia (dementia paranoides). In: Freud, S. *Case Histories II*. The Penguin Freud Library. Vol.9. London" Penguin Books.p.196.

What kind of mechanisms are involved here? Elsewhere Freud explains that neurosis and psychosis have the same source, that is, the libido that "has been set free after the process of detachment."⁸ When a historical trauma disrupts the well-established patterns of the subject's identification ("attachment") with people and things, the subject has two choices – to find either a "substitute for the lost attachment,"⁹ that is, a new object to invest the libido into, or a fantasy that would deny the fact of detachment.

Neurosis and psychosis represent two different forms of this phantasmatic activity. The former expresses itself in various forms of denial of the *object* of the previous attachment, thereby channeling the libido so that it manifests itself in the two types of neurotic reaction: the bodily symptoms of the *hysteric* and in the ritualized practices of the *obsessional*. The latter (i.e., psychosis), in turn, is represented as a rejection of the *desire* for the object. In this case, the liberated libido, having become "attached to the ego,"¹⁰ that is, having found a "substitute" *in* the subject, makes itself apparent in the multiple forms of hate (a negative, rejected desire)¹¹ aimed at the outer world.¹²

These differences in channeling the libido are not the only ones that separate neurosis from psychosis. Besides the different forms of the symptoms, they differ in the mechanisms involved in their production. As Freud suggests, the denial of the *object* of desire is usually worked through the mechanism of *displacement*,¹³ while the rejection of

⁸ Ibid., p.211.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Freud in his work on the memoirs of Judge Schreber, who suffered from severe paranoia, showed the forms which this rejection of the desire might assume. Thus, the proposition "I love him" might get transformed into: "I do not love him – I hate him;" "I do not love him – I love her;" "It is not me who loves him/her – she/he loves him/her;" and finally, "I do not love at all – I do not love anyone." Freud (1911) "Psychoanalytic notes...", p. 200-203.

¹² About this distinction between neurotic and psychotic forms of denial see, for example, Kristeva, J. (1982), p.7.

¹³ See for example, Freud S. (1909) "Notes upon a case of obsessional neurosis (The 'Rat Man')." In Freud, S. *Case Histories II*. The Penguin Freud Library. Vol.9. London" Penguin Books, 1991, p. 120;

the *desire* for the object is realized with the help of the mechanism of *projection*.¹⁴ The same idea could be expressed in Lacan's distinction between metonymy and metaphor – the denial of the object is worked through the operation of metonymic displacement, while the rejection of the desire for the object is realized via metaphorical condensation.¹⁵

Now, a reasonable question to ask is, what do these psychopathological mechanisms have to do with the students' essays and interviews? There are two answers to this question.

First, Freud himself, as well as his followers, repeatedly pointed out that the psychopathogenic mechanisms defining this or that form of symptom-formation are present in the daily life of so-called normal people. For example, projection, as Freud himself indicated, "has a regular share assigned to it in our attitude towards the external world."¹⁶ As for neurosis, I find the following comment by Melanie Klein especially useful. "As we know," she writes, "the normal man does not differ from the neurotic in structural but in quantitative factors."¹⁷ In other words, in the course of life, the majority of people do rely on these potentially psychopathogenic mechanisms in order to imaginarily reconcile their internal and external worlds. And while routinely using these mechanisms, people necessarily produce the corresponding symptoms and forms of defense. The psychopathogenic function of these mechanisms makes itself apparent when the *regular* "share" assigned to them becomes the *controlling* one, that is, when, for example,

and Freud S. (1963b) *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. New York: Collier Books, p.22. See also, Freud's earlier work on hysteria (together with Breuer), where he approached the idea of displacement as a disguise: Freud, S. (1996) "The psychotherapy of hysteria." In Breuer J., Freud, S. *Studies in Hysteria*. New York: Basic Books, p. 279.

¹⁴ Freud (1911) "Psychoanalytic notes...", p. 204-210.

¹⁵ See, for example, Lacan, J (1997) "Metaphor and metonymy (I): 'His sheaf was neither miserly nor spiteful'" In: Lacan, J. *The Psychoses*, 1955-56. London: W.W. Norton and Co, p. 220-221.

¹⁶ Freud (1911), p.204.

¹⁷ Klein, M. (1997) *The Psychoanalysis of Children*. London: Vintage. p.141.

displacement starts being the major or the only way of representing “reality.” Thus, since the “neurotic” and/or “psychotic” mechanisms are routinely exploited by “normal” people as they deal with reality in general and cope with anxiety in particular, it would be reasonable to expect that the activity of the indicated mechanisms finds its reflection in the students’ responses too.

The second answer concerns the possibility of translating the psychoanalytic technique into the terms of textual analysis. That is, whether it is feasible to use a general methodology of psychoanalysis as a form of textual critique in relation to the students’ essays.

Certainly, there is nothing new in this attempt. Two seminal books of Freud – *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* and *The Interpretation of Dreams* – clearly indicate that such an possibility is not only real, but a very fruitful one, too. From this point of view, in my analysis of the students’ essays I am going to follow multiple attempts of Freudians and post-Freudians to explore the hidden traces of the unconscious in the written, spoken or performed texts.

However, while keeping in mind Freud's conclusion about the interwoven fabric of relationship between the unconscious and the linguistic, I will concentrate in this chapter on a form of (textual) fantasy that remained relatively unexplored in his work, that is, on a fantasy that has the paranoid structure. To phrase this in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis, by exploring the students’ comments on the new Russian woman, I want to shift the focus from the analysis of metonymies of displacement to the analysis of metaphors of condensation.¹⁸ I will pursue this type of exploration heavily grounding myself in Klein’s

¹⁸ Lacan, J. (1997) “Metaphor and metonymy” ... p.221.

concept of idealization and, partially, in Kristeva's notion of abjection. It must be mentioned, albeit in passing, that I do not underestimate the significant difference between these two psychoanalysts in their understanding of the role of the "father", or the Third Party, in the subject's development. Thus, Klein's non-differentiation between the mother and the father – or between the breast and the penis¹⁹ – during the first stage of the ego formation, undoubtedly implies an interpretative strategy different from Kristeva's approach based on the "archaic inscription of the father" into the stage of the primary narcissism.²⁰ However, for the purpose of this research I would like to concentrate on the thesis that seems to have united Klein and Kristeva; namely, the early, pre-Oedipal, pre-symbolic, in other words, pre-linguistic origin of anxiety. I will return to this idea later in this chapter.

Before I begin my analysis of the students' comments I must remove one last theoretical obstacle. In his seminar on psychoses in 1955-56, Jacques Lacan states: "... The structure of a neurosis is essentially a question,"²¹ a question that "concerns the feminine position."²² Regardless of their genders, "hysterics... ask themselves the same question..."²³ that takes the following form: "What it is to be a woman?"²⁴ Lacan, following Freud, sees the kernel of this question in its problematizing of the issue of procreation with woman in its center. Klein's position in that respect is quite different and actualizes the role of the mother in producing/inducing anxiety in the child. I shall return

¹⁹ Klein (1997), p. 149.

²⁰ Kristeva, J. (1987) *Tales of Love*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.43.

²¹ Lacan, (1997) "The hysteric's question (II): What is a woman?" In: Lacan, J. *The Psychoses...*, p.174.

²² Ibid., p.178.

²³ Lacan, J. (1997) *The Psychoses*, 1955-56. London: W.W. Norton and Co, p.178.

²⁴ Lacan (1997) "The hysterics' question," p.170.

to this later, for now it suffices to indicate that it is the woman who preoccupies the wondering *hysteric*.

The question, though, remains, do the students' answers demonstrate the same hysterical structure at work? As I will argue, they do not. Despite my attempts to induce the students into the questioning mode of the hysteric by asking them explicitly what the woman as such, the old Soviet, and the new Russian women are, the majority of students chose to activate quite a different register. To my *structure of question* they juxtaposed their own *structure of answer*, understood in its literal as well as metaphorical capacities. It seems to me that the students' attempt to negotiate the place of the signifier of the new Russian woman within the frame of the existing "dominant fiction" has a rather different dynamic than the hysterical version of it offered by Lacan.

The way the students' negotiation proceeds reminds me of someone else's joke, repeated once by Lacan: "the little pegs always fit into the little holes, but there comes a time when the little pegs no longer correspond to the little holes."²⁵ In other words, the usually well adjusted holes (signifiers) of the symbolic fail to provide a stabilizing confinement for the new pegs (signifieds) of the subject. In the moment of the historical trauma, the symbolic is incapable of maintaining "a form into which the subject is inserted at the level of his being." To recall Jameson's triad, in the moment of this trauma, the "ideology of form" gets dismantled and the subject can *not* recognize himself as being this or that signifier.²⁶ And, almost like in the case of Freudian detachment, the liberated libido of meaning is in search of its new "hole," leaving behind the empty old one.

²⁵ Lacan J. (1992) "The wolf! The wolf!" In: Lacan J. *The Seminars. Book 1: Freud's papers on technique. 1953-54*. London: W. W. Norton. p.106.

²⁶ Lacan (1997) "The hysteric's question (II)", p.179.

Two examples can help to clarify this point. In my conversations with two students, a man and a woman, both almost said the same thing when trying to define/describe the “meaning” of their gender. The nineteen-year old female student with a background in international relations commented: “there is such a notion as “femininity” but I do not know how to define it.” (f-19-ir). The nineteen-year old male student with similar background told me:

- *Masculinity lost its former essence, and no new definitions have popped up on the surface yet. I cannot even tell what the contemporary meaning of such a notion as “masculinity” consists of.* (m-19-ir)

It is precisely these holes (“masculinity” and “femininity”) signifying the gender division (as well as the national one) that fail to provide the students with forms to insert the modified meanings of their “pegs” (e.g., “*post-Soviet*” femininity and masculinity) into. Moreover, these holes fail to provide the subjects with a more general form (e.g., man or woman) into which they are to be “inserted” in order to make their positionality meaningful, too. Having detached the meaning from the signifier, the students seem to have decided to avoid any attempt of self-determination or self-inscribing. Instead, they try to make sense of the external world by projecting their own anxiety onto/into it. Thus, it is not the neurotic structure of questioning the basic categories in order to locate one’s own place within them that is activated here. Rather, it is an attempt to escape into the world of the psychotic – safe inside but under a constant threat of destruction from outside.

In that respect, one way to deal with the feeling of the meaningful emptiness of the signifier, however surprising it might sound, is to proliferate its alleged meanings, to endlessly conflate and imbricate them. As if having given up on making the signifying hole fit for himself, the subject tries now to enlarge the hole by inserting into it all kinds of

pegs. In other words, when “femininity” is of no use for describing anyone familiar, it still might be utilized to frame someone completely foreign. Thus, as I showed earlier, the hole of the “new Russian woman” can be used to host any “peg” that has the label “new.” Seemingly, in this metaphorical operation the emphasis falls on to the signified(s); that is, the subject functions in the realm of the imaginary, i.e., the phantasmatic. It is the multiplicity of meanings for the same signifier of the new Russian woman that is so visible and so striking in the students’ essays, as if the unattached (libido of) meaning has fragmented itself in order to utilize all the means available for its manifestation. And yet, it seems to fail to get anchored in a new signifier. Lacan’s “chain of the signifiers”²⁷ becomes here too ineffective, too arbitrary, too unsettling. Consequently, the signified remains unchained, thus starting its own free-floating journey.

Having said that, I must admit the following – the signified, no doubt, exists only through the signifier. When speaking about the unchained signified, I try to distinguish between the signifier whose disassociation with the signified is acknowledged on the one hand, and the signifier that still apparently retains its indicative function, on the other. In other words, I want to distinguish between the signifiers that Mikhail Bakhtin called the “corpses of the words”²⁸ and the ones that are still “alive,” even if only in the imagination. To put this differently, the “femininity” that becomes “obsolete” because its content is “hard to define” and the *new Russian* “femininity” whose meaning is being openly looked for somewhere else, are different not only in their structural/structuring position (an abandoned notion in the first case and a “hole” around which a signifying activity is

²⁷ Lacan (1997) “The hysterics’ question,” p.179.

²⁸ Bakhtin, M. (1975) *Voprosy literatury i estetiki: issledovania raznykh let*. (Literary and Aesthetic Issues: Papers of Different Years.) Moskva: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, p.105.

performed in the second). These two notions differ in their symbolic functions as well. The ability of the sign(ifier) to magnetically attract a multiplicity of non-connected meanings implies a different attitude to "reality," or to the objects. To use yet another metaphor, as soon as the "masculine" stops being equated with the "phallic," the phallic acquires a certain amount of freedom and can get attached to something else. It seems that this loose semantic connection between the (social) signifier and the (personal) signified, caused, no doubt, by the existing social, ideological, cultural, and economic upheaval, forces the students not so much to reconcile the gap with working out the appropriate links and connections, but rather to repair this rupture with their fantasies centered around the figure of the new Russian woman. Thus, lacking in publicly recognizable signifiers, the students create their "outer" reality, which could be nothing other than their "inverted" inner world. More often than not, this "expelled" inner world is painted in negative colors. The following is one of the examples. Describing the notion of the "new Russian woman," a nineteen-year old man gives the list of such qualities:

- *New Russian woman: fur; luxury; does not like kids; young and beautiful; envy, greed, egoism, lust; easy money, prostitution; servants in her house; no interest and goals in her life; shamelessness, spiritual emptiness. (m-19-ir)*

But does not this semantic creativity "situated at the level of the subject's relation with the signifier" recall the creativity described by Lacan as the "proliferation of meanings," "of their labyrinth, in which the subject is supposedly lost or, even, arrested at a fixation"?²⁹ Aren't we dealing here with a classical case in which "reality itself initially

²⁹ Lacan, J. (1997) "On primordial signifiers and the lack of one." In: Lacan, J. *The Psychoses...*, p.199.

contains a hole that the world of fantasy will subsequently fill"?³⁰ Is not, then, the new Russian woman yet another historical incarnation of the symbolic holes that Lacan himself called "the vaginas of heaven"?³¹ Is she not one of those sirens, those "...miraculous girls who laid siege to the edges of the hole [and] provided the counterpoint, in the clucks of admiration from their harpies' throats: '*Verfluchter Kerl! What a lad!*'"³² Is she not among the ones who are called upon to help to mend the gap in the field of the imaginary – and "the defect of symbolic metaphor" that corresponds to this gap – by accomplishing the *Entmannung* (emasculatation)? And finally, does she not belong to the group of those imaginary creatures who luckily combine in themselves both parts of the equation: "*Madchen = Phallus*"?³³ That is, is she not a part and parcel of the fantasy with the paranoid structure?

I believe, the answers to all these questions have two sides. First, from the structural point of view the answer is positive. That is, unlike in the case of the neurotic (be it hysteric or obsessional), we are not dealing here with displacement and the doubt and uncertainty connected with it. Instead, the images of the new Russian woman demonstrate the work of two other psychological mechanisms that the subject uses in his/her attempts to deal with reality, or rather with the lost object of attachment. These mechanisms, constitutive for what Klein defined as the "paranoid position," are the *splitting* of the ego and the ego's *imaginary* projection.

Second, from the point of the content, the answer is negative. In Lacan's view, the "*Madchen=Phallus*" centaur remains meaningful as long as it has the *real* "vehicle, the

³⁰ Lacan, J. (1997) "I've just been to the butcher's." In: Lacan J. *The Psychoses...*, p.45.

³¹ Lacan, J. (1977) "On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis." In: Lacan, J. *Ecrits. A Selection*. Trans. by A. Sheridan. W.W. Norton and Company: London, p.206.

³² *Ibid.*, p.206.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.207.

holder, of the phallus"³⁴ as its background. What happens to this *Madchen*, when following McCallum, one asks a question, "*What if anyone could potentially have the penis?*"³⁵ And when one finds the following answer: "*Perhaps we do not know what a penis is?*"³⁶ To put it more positively, what happens when two parts of the symbolon fail to match each other? When the missing link between the signifier and the meaning attached to it gets unmasked? And what the is subject to do in order to cope with this detachable meaning? I will return to this idea of the "ambiguous" and "detachable" meaning (or is it penis?) later in the section on *femme fatales*.

SPLITTING THE MOTHER

In the previous chapter I tried to show that the binary thinking vividly demonstrated by the students to a certain extent was conditioned by the narrative structure itself. That is, a text as a collection of signs can exist only if the signs do not formally coincide with each other, if they substantively differ from each other, if they juxtapose, break away from each other. Melanie Klein's concepts of splitting, idealization, projection and introjection suggest another approach for the understanding of the binary thinking and writing.

In her later work, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, Klein made an attempt to summarize her points of divergence from the mainstream of Freudian psychoanalysis. The most crucial of them deals with the formation of the ego and the super-ego. As Klein

³⁴ Lacan, J. (1997) "The phallus and the meteor." In: Lacan, J. *The Psychoses...*, p.319.

³⁵ McCallum, E. L. (1995) "How to do things with fetishism." In *Difference*, 7 (3), p. 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.34.

points out, traditional psychoanalysis emphasizes the idea that the severity of the super-ego stems from the severity of the actual father, thereby forgetting that this severity could also have its roots in the “destructive impulses of the subject.”³⁷ By shifting emphasis from the cultural aspects of super-ego formation (i.e., the “normalizing” pressure of society) to its structural components (i.e., the pressure of the subject’s death instinct), Klein thus was able to explain why exactly a situation of uncertainty or anxiety produces an increased tendency to think in the simplified form of binaries, that is, why in these circumstances the subject regresses to the primitive stage in which everything is seen as if in a double vision. Klein’s attempt to theorize this regression finds its comprehensive, albeit not necessarily always consistent, solution in her version of object relations theory.

In her explanations of the psychoanalytic play technique, Klein stresses the importance of the child’s early identification with the mother. She writes:

In tracing... the development of impulses, phantasies, and anxieties back to their origin, *i.e.*, to the feelings towards the mother’s breast (even with children who have not been breast-fed), I found that object relations start almost at birth and arise with the first feeding experience; furthermore, that all aspects of mental life are bound with object relations.³⁸

Several elements are important here. First of all, unlike Freud and his followers, Klein locates the origin of later anxieties outside of traditional frame of the Oedipus complex and the genital stage. Rather, she emphasizes an earlier oral stage at which the

³⁷ Klein, M. (1997) p.138.

³⁸ Klein, M. (1975) “The psychoanalytic play technique.” *The Writings of Melanie Klein*. Vol. III. *Envy and Gratitude and Other works*. New York: The Free Press, p.138. As the quote clearly suggests, the way Klein construes the object relations with the mother has little to do with the mother as an actual figure, and this is the point where contemporary interpretations of the object relations theory - most visibly that of Nancy Chodorow’s - significantly differ from Klein’s. I will discuss this point in more detail later in this chapter.

first encounter of the child and its environment occurs. It is during this stage that the child is forced first to recognize the existence of the external world (of objects) and, second, to adapt itself to the demands of this world. However, this possibility of analytic regression to the subject's primeval relations outlined by Klein is not the only important dynamic referred to in the quotation. Another one is her insistence on the object-ifying attitude of the child to its environment. Let me look more closely at this.

It is well known that Melanie Klein tried to see the infant's development as a two-phase process rather than a traditional three-stage one. In her frame of references, the oral, the anal, and the genital stages (the traditional three-stage model) were subsumed under the two "positions." She termed them a "paranoid" or "paranoid-schizoid" position and a "depressive" position³⁹ respectively. The main difference between these two positions deals with the strategy the child uses in its relation to the external world, and, consequently, with the parallel processes in the ego and super-ego formation. Thus, while the first position presupposes various kinds of splitting, the second position is marked by the dominance of the process of synthesis. The understanding of the dynamic of the paranoid-schizoid position is crucial for explaining the structure and content of the students' essays, and that is why I shall discuss Klein's concepts at some length.⁴⁰

As Klein clearly points out, the child's "original object-relation only included one object, i.e., his mother's breast as representing his mother."⁴¹ The child's relation to the breast, however, is not one-dimensional and is colored by mutually exclusive impulses

³⁹ See, for example, Klein M. (1975) "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms." In *The Writings of Melanie Klein...* p.2.

⁴⁰ I am not going to deal with the second, "depressive," position, in this chapter mostly due to the different function it performs in coping with anxiety. Unlike the first position, this one aims to overcome the early splitting and thus to repress the binary type of perception of the inner/outer worlds.

⁴¹ Klein (1997) p. 147.

framed later as love and hate. In other words, the first object is seen as a source of good *and* bad feelings. Or rather, this object is seen as being polarized. Klein phrases it this way, "the first object...[that is,] the mother's breast... to the child becomes split into a good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast."⁴² To put it differently, during the paranoid position, the child splits its image of the single breast into two opposed aspects instead of trying to integrate the two aspects into a single coherent conception.

The question is: why does the child use splitting as its main mechanism of interaction with reality? The child's choice has a lot to do with two other processes that accompany the splitting, that is, *introjection* and *projection*. Both processes are clearly connected with the predominant importance of feeding as *the* link connecting the child and the world. In that respect, called upon as "one as the earliest ego-mechanisms and defences against anxiety,"⁴³ splitting performs what could be called "communicative" function of the child with the external objects.⁴⁴ With the help of splitting, the child maps out reality, as it were, distinguishing between the objects to be taken "inside" (to be introjected) and the objects to be "expelled" (to be projected). By undertaking this geographical polarization of the good (introjected) and the bad (projected) objects, Klein indicates, the child accomplishes two main goals. First, the "good breast is taken in and

⁴² Klein M. (1975) "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms," p.2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.6. Earlier in this article Klein outlined main sources of primary anxiety, namely, the fear of annihilation, the trauma of birth, frustration of bodily needs. (p.6)

⁴⁴ To quote Klein in full on this matter: "The onset of the development of [the child's] ego is accompanied by the growing ability to test reality leads the child to experience his mother as someone who can give or withhold satisfaction and in this way it acquires the knowledge of power of his object in relation to the satisfaction of his needs – a knowledge which seems to be the earliest basis in external reality for his fear of his object. In this connection it would appear that he reacts to his intolerable fear of instinctual dangers by shifting the full impact of the instinctual dangers on to his object, thus transforming internal dangers into external ones." (Klein (1997) p.126)

becomes part of the ego.”⁴⁵ If successful, this introjection of the good object becomes the basis for the ego’s further stable development.⁴⁶

However, the child simultaneously goes through a parallel process of projection; by singling out the bad objects and “ejecting” them into the outer world, the child disperses its anxiety as well as its ego.⁴⁷ Thus, secondly, it is these split off and expelled parts of the ego that provide the basis for the formation of the super-ego.⁴⁸ I will discuss this idea of expelling the parts of the ego in order to form (or sustain) the super-ego in more detail in the section on the new Russian man. For a moment, however, I would like to draw attention to another theorist and practitioner of psychoanalysis who has been developing a similar idea.

In her *Powers of Horror* Julia Kristeva makes several points that are relevant to my discussion here. One of them deals with instability of the subject’s (corporeal) borders and thus an always already present fear of disappearing, of being “swallowed” by the outer world. As she puts it,

the subject will always be marked by the uncertainty of his borders and of his affective valence as well; these are all the more determining as the parental function was weak or even nonexistent, opening the door to perversion or psychosis.⁴⁹

In other words, the less restrictive, the less stable the disciplining role of the symbolic (“the paternal function”) becomes, the more easily the subject can slip into the

⁴⁵ Klein (1975) “Envy and gratitude.” In: *The Writings of Melanie Klein...*, p.179.

⁴⁶ Klein M. (1975) “On mental health.” In: *The Writings of Melanie Klein...*, p.268.

⁴⁷ Klein M. (1975) “On Identification.” In: *The Writings of Melanie Klein...*, p.144.

⁴⁸ Klein (1997) p.140.

⁴⁹ Kristeva, J. (1982) *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.63.

psychotic realm of fantasy (about the maternal). The less certain the subject is about the frame of his/her own identity, the more threatening the unlimited choice of reactions available to the subject might look. The flexible personal boundaries (e.g., the forms of the desire) coupled with unclear social expectations (the *acceptable* forms of the desire) lead to the situation when a regression to the primeval form of communication with the outer world (pain *or* pleasure, good *or* bad) seems to be inescapable.

Why, however, are these borders, this watershed demarcating the subject and the *non*-subject mentioned by Kristeva, so fluid and movable? What does this fluidity rely upon? It relies upon a "slow, laborious production of object relation" constituting the subject.⁵⁰ In this production, the mother stands for the "object," abjection stands for the "relation," and the final aim is "to ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother."⁵¹ The relation to the object/mother could not be anything else but ab-ject, ex-pulsion, re-jection for it is this object that helps the subject maintain his/her external integrity. By clearly marking the "no man's territory," the subject simultaneously marks off his/her own domain as well.

As Kristeva rightly suggests, the dynamic of subject/object separation, that is, of the creation the subject's external boundaries, cannot be reduced just to the imposition of the Oedipal social rules ("not to desire one's own mother") onto the developing individual. The separation in question is always a separation of the self, in which "the outside is elaborated by means of a projection from within, of which the only experience we have is one of pleasure and pain. An outside in the image of the inside, made of pleasure and

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.48.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.64

pain.”⁵² It seems, however, that Kristeva’s point might be extended to a greater variety of “objects,” not limited to the figure of the mother only. The following comment of a student, describing her vision of Russia after the fall of Communism, helps to illustrate this idea of outside as the inside projected outward, of the external world of objects that is *felt* from inside. The student writes:

- *New Russia? I have a mixed feeling, and it is hard to understand what it is – a pain or a joy. The pain, for the country could have been majestic, prosperous, beautiful, and peaceful. As to the joy – it is because Russia, despite all the difficulties, is slowly moving ahead, and one can feel a certain freedom. (f-21-ir).*

As rhetorical as they might be, the “feelings,” that is, the internal reaction to the outer world, described by the student nevertheless clearly indicate how the mechanism of object relations works through introjection (pain/joy) and subsequent projection (pain/joy for the country). Another significant element of this comment is its already familiar binary structure, its rhetorical splitting – pain vs. joy – that establishes a personal connection between the divided inner self and correspondingly divided external world.

Kristeva’s idea of the dichotomized outside as a projection of the inside’s pain and pleasure no doubt recalls of Klein’s concept of the good and bad breast. The concepts are similar not only in their use of splitting (good breast/bad breast; subject/*non*-subject) as the main psychological tool in explaining the subject’s identity constitution. Both authors also see the roots of the child’s relation to anxiety and coping with loss in the very first split from the mother. In both versions of the object relations, it is to this stage that someone

⁵² Ibid., p.61.

regresses when they feel an overwhelming anxiety with which they must cope. More complex versions of thought vanish and the world collapses into binaries of good and bad. There is a difference between the two authors, though. Kristeva's emphasis on the significance of the Father in stabilizing the child's identity is helpful in understanding why the weakening of the paternal – that is, the normative, the societal function of the symbolic/signifier – forces the subjects to regress to the stage of the primal repression in the form of abjection, in the form of an instinctual reaction to the violated borders.

Another student comment on the notion of Motherland justifies the extension of Klein's and Kristeva's idea of the dynamic of object relations outside its initial (mother-child) dyadic frame and helps us to see how the feeling of pain and pleasure, that is, how the good object and the bad object, are polarized, in this case temporally. Giving definitions to such notions as the generic Motherland and the specifically post-Soviet Motherland, a female student writes:

- *Motherland – this word reminds me of something from my childhood. When I hear it, for a moment I would hold my breath and a song "What does the Motherland start from?" would come to my mind. Then, at school we were told about the "little Motherland," and as an example of it I pictured the village where my grandmother lived. ... This notion is felt especially strongly, when I am abroad. When you know that you are the only one who is not in your Motherland while all the others are, you feel slightly wounded. As if something is missing. And then you come to understand that you could not live for too long outside of your Motherland.*
- *New Russia – this sounds pompous. As to the meaning of the "new Russia," it is about the Russia that has ended up in a very deep pit, and it would take it a long time to get out of this pit. There is a severe class division, misery, and*

poverty. I have a feeling that everything has fallen apart. And that what has not yet fallen apart is being stolen. (f-21-ir)

This quotation seems to perfectly demonstrate the main concepts of the object relations theory discussed above. Not only does it show the splitting process in work – the good Mother(land) – the bad Mother(land), but also it makes clearer the dynamic of subject/object division with projection and introjection as its main mechanisms. The good Motherland is taken inside, internalized, hummed as a song, while the bad Motherland is projected outward onto the pathological symptoms that constitute it. It is hardly surprising that both descriptions employ the notion of borders – in their literal, as well as metaphorical sense. The *separation* from the object, in this case the Motherland – a short step from the Mother herself, is experienced as a “wounding” act (the fear of the introjected object in Klein’s terminology), resulting in missing “something” in the outer world (projection). At the same time, the *separated* (bad) object is seen as something “sunk” in the abyss, something divided, fragmented, *taken away*, stolen.

It is important to keep in mind, as Klein – and Kristeva – remind us, that the processes of projection and introjection have an illusory nature. From the very beginning, they are

bound up with the infant’s phantasy-life; and the anxieties that stimulate the mechanism of splitting are also of phantastic nature. It is in phantasy that the infant splits the object and the self, but the effect of his phantasy is a very real one, because it leads to feelings and relations (and later on, thought-processes) being in fact cut off from another.⁵³

⁵³ Klein M. (1975) “Notes on some schizoid mechanisms,” p.6.

In other words, splitting operates in the domain of the imaginary, where real objects are reduced to the function of an index, of a trigger that can provoke a chain of reactions. It is because of this phantasmatic and projected nature of the process of ego formation that Klein calls the infant's first stage the "paranoid-schizoid position."

If mechanisms of splitting are fully represented by projection and introjection, then its signifying, substantive part finds itself in the process of *idealization*. While Klein construed idealization as an extreme exaggeration of the good object only, I think it is possible to expand her concept onto the process of extreme exaggeration of the bad object too. Klein herself to a some extent evoked such an understanding by juxtaposing "an extremely bad" object to the "idealized" one.⁵⁴ From that point of view, I believe, the notion of *abjection* developed by Kristeva could be seen as a negative counter-part of the positive pole of *idealization*. Moreover, having established this binary (idealization/abjection), I think it is appropriate to further this logical construction, that is, to see abjection and idealization as particular versions of a more general process that follows splitting and that could be termed as *consolidation*. It is during this process of consolidation that the split-off parts of the bad or good object acquire their homogeneity and final, exaggerated valence. In other words, I think it is justifiable to speak of the *mechanism* of consolidation as lacking any (positive or negative) value. However, each concrete case of this consolidation develops simultaneously in the direction of abjection and in the direction of petrifying idealization.

The proposed extension of Klein's concept could be supported in a different way, too. As Klein and Kristeva make clear, both concepts have the same root – the fear of the

⁵⁴ Klein (1975) "Envy and gratitude," p.192.

maternal – and thus can be seen as performing the same structural function in the process of splitting – its deepening via the mechanism of consolidation. In case of Klein, extreme idealization creates a situation in which possession of the idealized good object becomes impossible (“too good to be true”). Instead of being introjected and integrated with the ego, the idealized object is perceived as something to be constantly looked for, albeit without any chance of getting a hold of it.

The same structural dynamic is typical for the process of abjection. In this case, however, the object that cannot be introjected is kept at a distance in order to maintain the integrity of the subject, which in turn creates the same, though negative, relation of the subject’s dependency on the object.

What, however, is the purpose, the function of idealization? Klein suggests that the main reason for the idealization of good objects is to protect the ego “against the terrifying ones.”⁵⁵ The higher the level of illusory, phantasmatic anxiety, the more exaggerated the “good breast” becomes.⁵⁶ To phrase this slightly differently, the polarity between the idealized/ideal and the abjected objects becomes stronger when the subject experiences frustration. Or, as Klein puts it herself, “idealization is a corollary of the persecutory anxiety – a defense against it – and the ideal breast is the counter-part of the devouring breast.”⁵⁷ Klein adds, however, that besides having persecutory anxiety as its main source, the idealization process may also take root in the desire for “unlimited gratification” provided by “an inexhaustible and always bountiful breast – ideal breast.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See, for example, Klein M. (1975) “On the development of mental functioning”. Vol.3., p.241.

⁵⁶ Klein (1975) “Notes on some schizoid mechanisms,” p.7.

⁵⁷ Klein (1975) “Envy and gratitude,” p.192.

⁵⁸ Klein (1975) “Notes on some schizoid mechanisms,” p.7.

At times, these two sources of idealization produce an interesting centaur. Thus, the "immodest and licentious" new Russian woman is not just "stupid and even dumb," as a male high school student put it, but also "beautiful." Let me quote a more clear-cut example, though. A female student gives the following descriptions of the ideal woman and the new Russian woman:

- *Ideal woman – she is a keeper of the hearth, more emotionally than intellectually developed, with a talent for education of children; ready to sacrifice herself, she is a sort of brood-hen, acting under a slogan "All the best – for the well-being of humanity! All the best – to the children!"*
- *New Russian woman – business-like, extravagant, emotionally closed, knowledgeable in art, economics, psychology, sociology. A career-minded woman. (f-18-fil)*

The descriptions are exemplary in their polarized valences. Not only is the new Russian woman outward-oriented and self-centered,⁵⁹ but she is also emotionally distant and openly alienating ("extravagant"). It seems that she is yet another version of the separated, cut-off object whose only function is to remind the subject about the other side of the coin, or, to phrase it another way, to remind the subject about the route to use in taking flight to the "idealized object as a means of escaping" from anxiety.⁶⁰ The same pattern of splitting the *private* brood-hen from the *public* business-woman is used in the following comment, too. As if completely following Klein's distinction between the idealized, the good, and the bad objects, a female student writes:

⁵⁹ In Russian the expressions "career-oriented" or "career-minded" person are traditional substitute for "self-centered" and "egotist".

⁶⁰ Klein (1975) "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms," p.9.

- *Ideal woman – attractive, able to take care of herself, tender, kind, smart, attentive; a good house-keeper who is capable of creating and keeping up the hearth, and who, if needed, could make a good career, too.*
- *The Soviet woman – a worn-out woman – usually always in the same, or same-looking, clothes – who is totally exhausted by her job, husband, and children; she likes to have guests over to her house and have genuine fun.*
- *The new Russian woman – “her legs start at her neck;” she is dressed in natural fur and has a “gold-field” all over her body. She is not known for her intellect; she is lazy and unconstrained; a chain-smoker; could laugh all of a sudden without any reason. (f-20-ir)*

Again, the new Russian woman functions here as a reminder, a reversal of the recent past – with her laziness, false (empty-souled?) and endless entertainment, with her conspicuous dress and her unreasonableness. She is precisely this “knot of debauchery,” as one male student puts it, this “extremely bad breast” whose positively idealized counter-part (the “ideal” woman, who is able to be “tender” and successful in her career at the same time) is called upon to justify the impossibility of internalizing the good “*old*” object anymore. For, as Klein reminds us, it is by “idealizing a good object,” the object of the primal identification, namely the “Soviet brood-hen,” exhausted and worn-out, that people try to deal with their “incapacity... to possess” it.⁶¹

Before I proceed to the discussion of the concrete images and interpretations of the new Russian “*Venus in Furs*” (to borrow the title of Sacher-Masoch’s famous book), I would like to briefly summarize the main points discussed above. As has been said, splitting of the object into the good and the bad – whether followed by idealization or not – on the one hand helps to protect the ego and, on the other hand, creates a basis for the

⁶¹ Klein (1975) “Envy and gratitude,” p.193.

super-ego. Done in a situation of crisis and/or anxiety, splitting usually results in the subject's regression to the primary stage of the his/her object relations, that is, to the period of identification with the woman, the mother.

In that respect, the phantasmatic terrifying object of the new Russian woman can be seen as an outcome of projection of the ego's fragments into the outer world. As a result of these operations of splitting and projection at least two aims are accomplished. First, the destructive impulses of the ego are located outside of the subject, that is, in the figure of the new Russian woman, and thus are seen as alien, foreign, not belonging to the subject. And second, as a result of this projection, the positive part of the ego is temporarily preserved and a situation of internal stability is more or less restored; the subject thus is free to re-find his/her good object of attachment again. I will discuss this "positive" work of the ego in the chapters on the new Russian man and the new Russia.

The phantasmatic nature of the new Russian woman brings me to one more theoretical conclusion, or rather observation. While heavily grounding my interpretations in object relations theory, i have so far avoided the theoretical schemes and concepts of Nancy Chodorow, one of the leading contemporary specialists in the field. This certainly needs some explanation. The major point of my disagreement with the conceptual scheme used in *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* concerns Chodorow's principal presumption that it is the *actual* mother who determines the process of the child's object-choice and thereby the primary and secondary identification.⁶² Following Klein's idea of *projective* identification, i tried to

⁶²To give a brief example, I want to quote from Chodorow's book: "In our society, a girl's mother is present in a way that a boy's father, and other adult men, are not. A girl, then, can develop a personal identification with her mother, because she has a real relationship with her that grows out of their earlier primary tie. She learns what it is to be womanlike in the context of personal identification with her mother and often with other female models (kin, teachers, mothers of friends). Feminine

show throughout the chapter that both the object-choice and identification have a *phantasmatic* structure. That is, the *actually* present or absent mother does not function in the process of ego formation as a *role*-model but rather is used as a screen to project the child's fantasies and anxieties onto, or as a gap to build a wall of fantasy around. Unlike Chodorow, I tried to distinguish between the process of role-learning (i.e., Socialization) and the process of ego development (i.e., Identification) and do *not* substitute the latter for the former. Besides that, there is yet another major difference that deals with the role of language in the process of identity formation. Neither in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, nor in her later works,⁶³ does Chodorow explore this problem, thus leaving unanswered the question about the dynamic of the subject's discursive positioning of him or herself within the domain of culturally available symbols. Within Chodorow's paradigm it remains unclear how (if at all) "discourse is being substituted for maternal care," that is, how language substitutes for what is thought to be the "good breast."⁶⁴ As a result, the object relations scheme or, rather, the mimetic concept of identification developed by Chodorow, could offer no theoretical apparatus to explain the phenomenon of "phantasmatic inhibition" or that of "binary" thinking so vividly demonstrated in the students' essays.

identification, then, can be based on the gradual learning of a way of being familiar in everyday life, exemplified by the relationship with the person with whom a girl has been most involved." (Chodorow, N. (1978) *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.174-175)

⁶³ See, for example: Chodorow, N. (1994) *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

⁶⁴ Kristeva J. (1982) *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.45.

(EX)CHANGING VALUES

In spring of 1995 in St. Petersburg (where I lived then), the two city's main theaters seemingly tried to juxtapose the "woman from the Piccadilly Circus" to their own, high-culture, versions of the same phenomenon. Almost simultaneously three major theatrical shows were exposed to spectators. The Kirov Opera House began to perform two operas, Richard Strauss' "*Salome*" and Dimitry Shostakovich's "*Katherine Izmaylova*." The Bolshoy Drama Theater performed Shakespeare's "*Macbeth*," which had provided Shostakovich with the plot for his master-piece.⁶⁵ There was something striking in the kaleidoscope of the exported or inspired-from-abroad images: the dancing Salome, demanding the head of John the Baptist; Lady Macbeth obsessively trying to get rid of the blood stains on her hands; Katherine Izmaylova - a Russian lady Macbeth, killing her family in the name of love. Striking, and yet not surprising. The fear of social disarray, political uncertainty, and cultural mutations traditionally manifests itself in the images of the woman who has gone wild, violent, obsessive.

Patrice Petro, for example, in her study of representation of woman in Weimar Germany, indicates that images of the modern woman were "a projection of male anxiety and fears - anxiety and fears emanating from various phenomena of modernity that were recast and reconstructed in terms of uncontrollable and destructive female sexuality."⁶⁶

Another author, Janey Place, speaking about film noir, concludes:

⁶⁵ The opera is based on the novel written by the Russian writer Leskov in the end of the nineteenth century. The title of the novel (and for some time the title of the opera itself) is "Lady Macbeth from the Mzensk province."

⁶⁶ Petro, P. (1989) *Joyless Streets: Woman and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, p.34.

The dark lady, the spider woman, the evil seductress who tempts man and brings about his destruction is among the oldest themes of art, literature, mythology and religion in Western culture.... Film noir is a male fantasy, as is most of our art. Thus woman here as elsewhere is defined by her sexuality... in film noir, it is clear that men need to control women's sexuality in order not to be destroyed by it.⁶⁷

To make this thesis about the seemingly eternal persistence of the image of *femme fatale* even more striking, I want to use a recent example. A book of "*Jokes About the Most Important*" published in 1997 in Moscow in the section titled "*From a Wife to a Secretary*" offers the following:

*A new Russian man attends a reception with his wife. As soon as they enter the room, a waiter comes up to the man and, offering drinks, politely asks him: "What does your wife usually drink?" "My blood!" – was the answer.*⁶⁸

Let's see how this new Russian "blood drinker" of the late nineties is portrayed in the students' essays.

As I have already mentioned, based on my data, I can only partially agree with the thesis that the images of the *femme fatale* are primarily projections of male anxiety. Students of both genders demonstrate a similar understanding of what the new Russian woman is about. And the reason for this similarity, as I have argued, lies in the structure of psychotic fantasy with the "archaic" mother (to use Kristeva's term) as the object of primary identification. It is to this stage where, to put it metaphorically, the distinction between the breast and the phallus is yet to be discovered that the subject regresses during

⁶⁷ Place J. (1978) "Women in film noir." In E. Ann Kaplan (ed.) *Women in Film Noir*. London: British Film Institute, p. 34-35.

⁶⁸ *Anekdoty o Glavnom* (1997): *Anekdoty o Novikh Russkikh*. Vol.1 (Jokes About the Most Important: Jokes About New Russians. Vol.1. Moscow: Kopeika, p.14.

times of crises, destabilizations of identity, and other upheavals. In the previous sections of this chapter I tried to show *what* the processes, whereby the students construct the images of the new Russian woman are (i.e., splitting and consolidation), as well as *how* these images are located in regard to other images (i.e., projection vs. introjection). My general presupposition was that the fantasy with the paranoid structure created in the students' essays had been a result of the students' attempt to cope with the anxiety caused by the "historical trauma." In the reminder of this chapter I want to explore whether it is possible to find any traces that would allow me to speak of a certain *content* of this trauma, that is, of certain social processes that might have forced the students to retreat to the binary thinking. As I will show, the content of these processes could be described by two main pairs of opposites – "*public vs. private*" and "*selling vs. buying*."

One of the female students describing the new Russian woman distinguishes her two main versions. "The new Russian woman," the student writes, "is predominantly a housewife, sometimes, a business-woman." (f-21-ir). I shall deal with the more rare version of the new Russian woman first. Even though her representations in the students' essays are infrequent, she is nevertheless present enough to produce a certain coherent portrait.

It has been shown already that quite often the image of the new Russian woman is construed in terms of her "public" qualities, her ability to perform a role on a publicly open stage – be it the Piccadilly Circus, a private display of her self-indulging consumption, or the world of business. In any respect, the important moment of this publicity is one's – mostly *voluntary* – subjection to the constant external, anonymous and/or friendly, evaluation. The gaze of the outside examination, assessment, and

recognition is persistently looked for, is relentlessly solicited; the new Russians of both genders are usually described as the ones who are constantly showing themselves off, the ones, who, as a student describes it, “try to live as if in a show-case” (f-18-tech). It is not surprising, then, that one of the main metaphors of the new Russian *woman* is that of the “fashion-freak.” As a male student puts it, “The new Russian woman is a high roller. She is chasing after *haute couture* in everything” (m-20-avto). No doubt, this fantasy about the incessant striving for being *seen* is a reflection of one’s attempt to find external approval of one’s being as such. And yet, there seems to be more than that. Until recently, almost any form of public display in (Soviet) Russia was associated with its negative consequences – public purges, public marches, public pressure, etc. With minor exceptions, to be “*publicly* acknowledged” was meant to be “*officially* acknowledged.” Fragmentation and multiplication of the institutes of authority have changed the situation completely – one’s public exposure has become a key element to achieving success. However, mastery of this key element does not come about easily. As the students’ comments indicate, there is a certain discomfort in the effort to replace the eye of the Big Brother by the eyes of multiple spectators. There seems to be a gender difference in the perception of a new Russian man’s and a new Russian woman’s self-exposure, too. A male student with a background in car-engineering reflects this difference in the following way:

- *New Russian men? They are different, but usually: a maximum of money and a minimum of culture...*
- *New Russian woman – she is a very self-confident, respectable business-woman who thinks that she is pretty lucky in this life. (m-21-avto)*

What is described here, is an opposition of the “dummies in the Mercedeses” (m-20-avto) vs. “the well-groomed and self-confident new Russian woman” (m-21-ir). The distinction seems to be striking – in the woman’s case her public appearance (“well-groomed”) is coupled with her feeling about this appearance (“self-confident”), while in the men’s case their appearance is reduced to the object (Mercedes) and then ridiculed altogether (“dummies do not drive Mercedes anyway”). In other words, the necessity, the *fact* of public exposure is recognized; the *ability* to practice it is reserved for someone else. And, apparently, the new Russian business-woman functions in this respect as an outlet for the anxiety caused by clash between the demand to become “public” and the personal discomfort about *becoming* public. The emphasis on feelings and self-perception of the new Russian business-woman so vividly demonstrated in the students’ comments is telling in that respect. For example, a female student with a background in international relations makes the following remark:

- *The new Russian woman? She is almost the same as any other average woman but she has such qualities as persistence, boldness, steadfastness, and perseverance. (f-21-ir)*

Another student describes the same idea this way: “this woman has an iron grip and very strong will” (f-20-ir). But what does this “iron grip” of persistence aim at? The aim of this “energetic, ambitious, and strong” woman (f-18-fil) is “not to be dependent financially, not to be dependent in anything at all” (f-18-fil). In other words, the purpose of this sort of new Russian woman is to be able to exist as a separate, autonomous subject in the world of business. A student specifies the indicators of success of such an activity:

"the new Russian woman is a business woman who has her own business, a company, a family, a house, a flat" (f-18-fil).

There is something missing though in these idealistic descriptions of a new woman in Russia; there is something not quite right with all these images of the "iron grip" and "perseverance:" as if the cozy image of the Soviet brood-hen manifests itself and thus prevents the new breed of business-woman from achieving her state of complete independence. A female student puts this bluntly: "there is nothing domestic about this business-minded new Russian woman" (f-20-ir). Another student, whose "indicators of success" I quoted earlier, finishes her description of the new Russian business woman with the line: "she is the one who is dreaming about a passionate husband" (f-18-fil). In other words, the component which is non present in these images of the independent Russian woman belongs to the domain of the private. Without a passionate husband and a satisfying domestic life, she may be independent, but she is incomplete; and neither her public success nor a high level of her self-confidence can ameliorate this lack.

The image of the Russian business-woman, however important its function, is only marginally represented in the students' essays. The majority of them think of the new Russian woman in terms of her second version, that is, housewife. It is this character who personifies the opposition "selling vs. buying." It is precisely this person who is thought of as a "blood-drinker."

Extending the metaphor of prostitute, many students describe the new Russian woman as a "beautiful, well dressed, careless person; the one who is cruel and calculating, who lives for money and love only" (f-18-fil). Usually, the adjective "new Russian" is a

sign of the woman's marital status – “a new Russian woman is a new Russian man's wife” (f-17-tech). Or as another student puts it:

- *The new Russian woman? Maybe she will appear one day. For now all I could say is that she is a new Russian man's wife* (f-20-ir).

However, the “main reason for her marriage was a financial one, and very often she is unhappy in her marriage” (f-21-ir). In other words, “the new Russian woman is a woman who made a profitable deal – she married not the man but his money” (f-17-fil). But what does this “*freedom-for-money*” exchange results in? What are the following stages of capital's circulation? A female student sees it this way:

- *A new Russian woman is a new Russian man's wealthy wife. She stays at home (she does not work), visits beauty salons and clothing stores. She dines out in the restaurants with her husband or a lover. She does not constrain herself a bit but completely depends on her husband's money.* (f-20-ir).

A gloomy version of the same “freedom-for-money” exchange takes the following form:

- *A new Russian woman – she is a decoration of the house; weak and beautiful, she is afraid of her husband, she does not decide on anything; she is just her husband's supplement. Lacking in initiative, she is silent, narrowly educated and has a narrow scope of interests.* (f-19-ir)

This “silent” version of the new Russian woman is not so typical, though. Predominantly, her representation is pretty sound, even noisy, so to speak. The following characteristics of the new Russian woman are quite common:

- *The new Russian woman - a mink coat and all the other qualities of the ideal woman; a good car, high heels and stuff like that. (m-18-tech)*
- *A new Russian woman is independent, beautiful, cunning, and sexual. (m-22-avto)*
- *A new Russian woman is a woman behind the wheel of a car, well-groomed, beautiful. (f-19-ir)*
- *A new Russian woman knows how to properly spend the money her husband earned. (f-18-fil)*
- *The new Russian woman follows the fashion and takes care of herself. (f-20-ir)*

Even when the equivalent (or *non-equivalent*) exchange has not happened yet, the new Russian woman is still part and parcel of the same economy:

- *The New Russian woman spends all her leisure time in the beauty salons and hunting for a wealthy husband. She is beautiful and knows her price/value. She is elegant, attractive, strong, feminist and full of initiative. (f-20-ir).*

The “selling her body” vs. “buying consumer stuff” binary, as well as the multiple comments on wisely spending money, on knowing one’s price/value, on making a good deal, on having one’s own business, etc. are certainly hardly an accident. It seems to me that what happens here is association of the qualities of market behavior with the new Russian woman. In other words, she is a perfect figure by which to personify a combination of the idea of making one’s self public with the necessity of selling one’s self publicly: a well-groomed woman in a mink coat walking down the Piccadilly Circus.

By making the new Russian woman into a symbol of emerging capitalism with its demand that everyone know his or her value/price and be able to sell one's self wisely in the (marriage or job) market, the students, in a sense, create a symbolic field where exchanges of such a sort are permissible. Having identified in the figure of the new Russian woman the lowest level of possible personal "sold-out-ness" and personal corruption, the students seemingly achieve a desirably placating situation, in which any other exchange of values would look almost decent. An expelled (abjected) image of the new Russian woman does perform here the function of the ejected ego, or rather the parts of it that have formed the foundation of the super-ego. Based on the social rules and moral norms of the Soviet epoch, this super-ego came in conflict with the newly emerging forms of the self, and thus has reached a stage where it has to be either replaced or repressed. Seemingly, repression does not happen yet, and in the chapter on the new Russia I will show the forms in which this replacement finds itself.

I want to finish this chapter with yet another piece from the "*Jokes About the Most Important*." To some extent it epitomizes a wide-spread vision of the new Russian woman whose iron awareness of her value/price can leave the man without his most important attributes – in this case, money.

1

Two female friends talk about their lives.

- I heard you finally found your happiness? How did it happen?

- Oh, very simply. First, I met a new Russian man. He had a lot of money and I had a lot of experience.

- And now?

- And now, he has a lot of experience and I have a lot of money.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ *Anekdoty o Glavnom* (1997), p.17.

As I tried to show throughout this chapter, the signifier of the new Russian woman functions as certain meaningful hole or gap in the symbolic field of the students. It has been called upon to manifest the process that Mary Ann Doane termed as “epistemological trauma.”⁷⁰ My main aim in this chapter was to define the location of this trauma, that is, to realize whether the students’ attraction to the new Russian woman is based on the appeal of her images-signifiers or whether this attraction is caused by the students’ desire to find a repository for their signifieds. To put this another way, my main task was to identify in the students’ fantasies a *paranoid* rather than a *neurotic* structure. This diagnostic attempt seems to be successful. As I demonstrated in the chapter, the students were not at all preoccupied with the typical question of the hysterics, “What does the woman mean?” (Or rather, “What does she signify?”) Instead, apparently, the students’ approach to (the images of) the new Russian woman could be described as: “Let her signify anything I can not find a language for.” The theoretical implications of this diagnosis are multiple, and I will be dealing with them in the following chapters. Here it suffices to discuss briefly just two main repercussions of the paranoid structure at work – the symbolic aphasia and the narcissistic object-choice.

The symbolic aphasia, the retreat to the binary thinking, to splitting and consolidation as the main tools of communicating with reality, is to be accompanied by two subsequent processes. Having given up on establishing solid links between the signifiers and the signifieds the students would inevitably confront a problem of the “frozen” language of phantasmatic desire. Which is to say, being unable to learn a new language that would adequately express their meanings, and thus being unable to re-enter

⁷⁰ Doane, Mary Ann. (1991) *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, p.1.

a new Symbolic order, the students have no other choice but to over-exploit the signifiers of the previous period. Moreover, this unwillingness and/or incapacity to cross the boundaries of the Imaginary should inevitably result in over-evaluation of the structural, instrumental, or syntactic (as opposed to content- and narrative-oriented) mechanisms of the “old” language. The students’ use of complementary negations and binary thinking described in *The World of Things*, as well as the splitting and consolidation analyzed in this chapter are only two examples of the attempt to express a new meaning through using old terms. In my analysis of the students’ “imaginary consumption” I will develop this idea further.

Second, as has been indicated, the paranoid structure presupposes a serious difficulty on the part of the subject in establishing satisfying relations with the outer world. If my “diagnosis” is right, then, following the object relations logic, the students, instead of finding a new object of attachment, should demonstrate the opposite, a dynamic which could be described as withdrawal from the outer world. Being unable to symbolically frame a new object of their desire, being confined by the language of the previous epoch, the students should manifest the signs of what is usually termed narcissism. One’s experiencing of the outer world as threatening is to be counterbalanced by the stabilizing effect of one’s inner self. I will be exploring these issues in the chapter *The Narcissistic Screening*.

Speaking more specifically about the place of the new Russian woman in the students’ essays it can be said that she plays a role of a signifying hole, a rupture around which both male and female students can build a wall to ward off their anxiety about the rapidity of the changes in the new Russia. The high level of frequency with which students utilize the image of the fallen woman, the femme fatale, the woman who knows her price

in the brave new market and the distinct structural and substantive position of this image in regard to the others (e.g., the new Russian man, the Soviet woman, etc.), I believe, sufficiently prove that this phantasmatic figure provides a certain amount of psychological help for the students. It helps them to deal with the feeling of uncertainty about the past left behind by quickly disappearing reference points of state Socialism and also gives them a way to cope with the anxiety about a possible capitalist future. By having created a negative pole of pain in the image of the new Russian woman who is rejected, the students thus free themselves for finding a positive pole of pleasure.

THE WORLD OF THINGS:

••• *Inflating Prices*

Man does not adapt himself to reality; he adapts reality to himself. The ego creates the new adaptation to reality, and we try to maintain cohesion with this double.

Jacques Lacan¹

Among various oppositions used by the students to describe the new Russia and the Soviet Motherland, the most frequent one is a binary that reflects two different patterns of consumption associated with these two societies. In a sense, the attempt to symbolically displace the social and political differences between Soviet and post-Soviet societies onto the domain of consumption is understandable. Recalling Melanie Klein's notions of introjection and projection as the main tools whereby relations with the outer world are realized, consumption can be seen as one of the most natural ways of appropriation and/or rejection of societal changes. Or, to put it another way, consumption can be seen as a practice in which social changes find (or don't) their most stable ground and their most personalized expression. The following quote from an essay by a male student shows that the socially conditioned *forms* of consumption go hand in hand with individual *feelings* that are, if not directly connected, then at least associated with the forms:

- *When I think about the Soviet Russia I recall the huge line-ups in the stores and constant grocery-bags. But it was also kind and cheerful in this country.*

¹ As quoted in Roudinesco, E. (1997) *Jacques Lacan*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.114.

- *The new Russia? – I associate this notion with a lot pain and heartlessness. Everything is for sale; everything is being either bought or stolen. Tramps, refugees, and tradesmen are everywhere. (m-20-avto)*

There is, however, a certain paradox – at least an apparent one – in the way the students choose to reflect on the opposites of the *empty Soviet grocery bags* vs. the *full post-Soviet stores*. Metaphorically speaking, even when they do successfully accomplish overcoming the money obstacle on their way to the post-Soviet supermarket, they still fill up these grocery bags with the same old sausage, maybe in better wrapping. A female student writes:

- *The Soviet people. The most distinguishing feature of the Soviet people is the restricted scope of their interests (I have in mind an "average" Soviet person, even though back then everyone was average). When recalling the Soviet person, I see a woman with string-bags (with sausages in them) in each hand running home after work. I also see a man walking home with a newspaper in his hand. As soon as he comes home, he occupies the couch; his wife meanwhile, after an equally hard working day, hurries up to the kitchen to cook dinner for him. She spends her weekend doing laundry, ironing, cleaning, and washing. And he still keeps lying on the couch. Once in while (maybe!) they would go to the cinema or... well, that's basically everything they could go to – plus theater, and maybe a museum. After that they would come home and go to sleep.*
- *The new Russian people. I do not want to depict a typical new Russian couple as it exists in the popular imagination. I just want to describe an ordinary family living in the new times in the new Russia. She could afford herself the pleasure of buying the cosmetics that she exactly wants, having the shoes that suit her, even if, to buy the things she likes, she would have to save money for a certain period. This couple can go to a supermarket and buy together the food they like, to treat themselves (yes! for their own pleasure) with the*

candies, cookies, or sausages that they want to buy. And this is the difference. Everyone chooses whatever he or she wants. He could go wherever he wants and enjoy himself in a way he'd like. And if he likes a computer better – he would buy it and get busy with it. Maybe all this sounds primitive and even banal, but this is my opinion. It is this way that allows for more possibilities of being a man and being a woman. (f-19-ir)

There is yet another aspect of the students' fantasies about the new Russian consumption that allows for a broader choice of gender specific behavior, so to speak. Surprisingly enough, except for some rare comments, it is the new Russian *man* – not the new Russian *woman* – who acts as the main consumer in the students' essays. Despite the students' general view of the new Russian woman as the one who has sold her freedom in exchange for clothes and food, the outcome of this exchange, that is, her consuming activity as such, is more anticipated than actual. On the contrary, the objectified indicators of the new Russian man's financial power, his multiple, albeit not so various, possessions are listed in almost every student's essay. For example, in the following quotation one of the students makes clear this difference between the man's and the woman's "grocery lists" clear:

- *The new Russian man – a crimson suit, a tie, a jeep; [his own] flat; restaurants; a lot of mistresses; prosperity, luxury.*
- *The new Russian woman: a business-woman who has her own enterprise, a company, a family, a house, and a flat... (f-18-fl)*

The flamboyance of the new Russian man remains one of his main qualities even when the new Russian woman is not equipped with the props of her own business. In this case, she acts as a backdrop against which the Russian man makes his transactions. Or, rather, she exists as one of his possessions. A female student writes:

- *A new Russian man is a short and fat man in a crimson suit who even when standing on his sack of money with a cellular phone in his hand, is still shorter than his female companion. (f-18-tech)*

It is precisely this new Russian man's consumption habits and choices as depicted by students that I would like to explore in the text that follows. The main questions I want to answer are, what are the structural reasons underlying the students' fantasies about the new Russian man's patterns of consumption? How, that is, through which metaphors and symbols, do they describe his new status? And finally: What are the rhetorical devices whereby the students identify the ideology of success in the post-Soviet Russia? To answer these questions, I will mainly rely on the theoretical conclusions developed in Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of tastes and his theory of cultural production. In the first section of this chapter I will draw a general picture of the new Russian man as it appears in the students' essays; in the concluding section I will try to give this picture a sociological explanation.

PIERRE CARDIN, INCORPORATED

Trying to define to what extent the subject's original patterns of daily consumption can correlate with the subject's upward social mobility, Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* points out a possible conflict between the conditions of the acquisition of property and the conditions of its use. As he indicates, the discordance between the two usually is a result of the gap that emerges between the practices of consumption typical for the earlier stages of the subject's social position and the practices that one tries to get accustomed to later in

his or her life.² In Bourdieu's opinion this rule holds true in regard to the collective subject as well. For, as he puts it:

If a group's whole life-style can be read off from the style it adopts in furnishing or clothing, this is not because these properties are the objectification of the economic and cultural necessity which determined their selection, but also because the social relations objectified in the familiar objects... impress themselves through bodily experiences... Every interior expresses, in its own language, the present and even the past state of its occupant.³

While completely agreeing with Bourdieu's main thesis about the socially conditioned nature of people's tastes and their enduring nature, I want to extend his approach to interpret a slightly different realm of consumption, that is *imaginary* consumption. Or, to state it more precisely, the imaginary re-production of the previous patterns of consumption behavior within a different context and/or environment, an attempt to utilize the elements of the old "dominant fiction" in order to overcome (or repress?) the "historical trauma." When answering my questions about the new Russian man, the students chose to characterize him first of all as a distinctive kind of consumer. My questions then are, to what extent does this imaginary new Russian man reflect the consumption habits and patterns of the students themselves? And if he does, would it be possible to trace in the students' essays the same conflict between the form of the acquisition of the new Russian property (in this case – imaginary/imagined) and the conditions of its use, rooted in the students' Soviet and post-Soviet experience.

² Bourdieu P. (1989) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. New York: Routledge, p.109.

³ Bourdieu (1989), p.77.

I want to start with a student's quotation that pretty well captures the main types of new Russian man. Describing his vision of this phenomenon, a male student with a background in international relations makes the following splitting:

- *A new Russian man could be:*
 - (a) *a man with a shaved skull, overdosed with anabolic steroids, with a golden cross on his chest. He drives a Land-rover, and usually is dumb. His life is based on robbery and plunder;*
 - (b) *an elegant young person, a stylish gentleman, highly educated; knowledgeable in politics and economics; working a lot. (m-20-ir)*

Thus, there are at least in two aspects to emphasize. First, *structurally* speaking, the way in which the opposition between the "shaved-skull" man and the "stylish" gentleman is created here is remarkably different from the binaries that describe the new Russian woman (*business woman* vs. *housewife*). That is, in the student's vision the collective image of the new Russian man, in a sense, has a circular nature; it is self-referential, self-contained, embracing two (the negative – "*vulgar*" – and the positive – "*elegant*") poles within itself. The types of the new Russian man might be different, but that which differentiates them belongs to the same symbolic or, rather, *aesthetic* field. This certainly was not the case with the new Russian woman: the oppositions the students used to describe her imply either a drastic expansion of the realm of the woman's functioning ("*public* vs. *private*") or a qualitative change in her consumer status ("*selling* vs. *buying*"). To put the same idea differently, in portraying the new Russian man the students lock his images into a closed (closet?) circuit with no idealized or abjected

outsider (besides *another* new Russian man) to refer to; the difference between a “bad” new Russian man and a “good” one is not so much a difference in essence so as a difference in degree (e.g., “*badly educated*” vs. “*highly educated*”; “*vulgar*” vs. “*elegant*”). What distinguishes one type from another are the different stages each of them achieve during the process of evolution: however different in their development, they both, nevertheless belong to the same breed. When describing the new Russian man, one of the students makes this “genetic” connection between the two – or rather this transformation of one into another – even more clear: “The new Russian man? The majority of them has made their money illegally, but now they are moving into legal business” (m-20-avto).

The second major difference between the new Russian man’s and woman’s types of consumption reflected in the students’ comments is connected with their silence about the *sources* ensuring the new Russian man’s consumption. If the new Russian woman in order to enter the domain of the market (economy) and thus the domain of symbolic goods, “makes a good deal” by “selling her freedom” or her professional qualities (of business-woman), then the point of the new Russian man’s entrance remains unclear.⁴ The only sure thing about the new Russian man’s money is its illegal origin. In other words, the man’s personal role in the accumulation of capital is somewhat displaced: unlike the new Russian woman, he did not sell his own body or his professional qualities in order to

⁴ Interestingly enough, the students are not alone in this opinion. As one of the most influential Russian newspapers – *Izvestia* – stated recently, “There is no reliable information about the sources of the new Russians’ wealth.” Moreover, the poll conducted by the newspaper among businessmen, state officials, lawyers, etc. (i.e., among the people who either have a new Russian style of consumption or have a chance to monitor it first-hand) confirmed another students’ view – 84% of the respondents thought that the sources of wealth were illegal. (*Izvestia*, (1998) April 22.)

establish/manifest his status. His “lots of money” is, as a student puts it, “easily earned” (f-20-ir). Yet another one adds,

- *The new Russian men? Those high-rolling bold daddies with golden neck-chains, crosses, and pot-bellies? They are not famous for their intellect, but they do count money well. They are far from being perfect. They mindlessly spend money for they get it easily (illegally); criminals. Women are slightly better but not that much. They look down upon people, but at the same time they are very efficient people. (f-21-ir)*

I will discuss how exactly the new Russian men “mindlessly” spend their money a little bit later; at this point I merely want to schematize the difference between the new Russian man’s and the new Russian woman’s circulation on the market. In order to do that, I want to use two formulas. The woman’s circulation could be represented by the following diagram:

$$G \rightarrow M \rightarrow G$$

Where G stands for “goods” on the market (first herself and then her mink coat), and M stands for money. The diagram makes clearer the logic of the new Russian woman’s position on the market: she realizes her value/potential only through constant commodification of herself, through constant “deals” in which her body, freedom, or, for example, professional qualities get objectified. In that respect, the students’ comments about the new Russian woman as a woman who knows her value/price are more than telling – she is the one who was lucky enough to “make a profitable deal,” as a female student put it (f-17-fil).

Contrary to that, the man’s circulation has quite a different form, that is:

$M \rightarrow G \rightarrow M$

In his case, the goods are never good enough, so to speak, to reflect his value. They do not perform the anticipated symbolic function, they are mindlessly bought and, as we will see later, are mindlessly replaced by the same mindless type of goods. The purpose of buying in this case is not to make a deal, even a profitable one. Rather, the idea is to indicate, to mark off one's location on the financial scale solely in order to move it up during the next transaction.

The difference between the new Russian man's and the new Russian woman's types of market circulation is probably the reason why the students locate them within different public realms, or different segments of the market. The publicity of the new Russian woman is seen as basically not having any *specific, targeted* audience; that is, her alleged *publicity* is equal to *availability* of the goods on the market, indifferent to any other dimension but financial. The sexual availability of the new Russian woman, is certainly a part of her "public" identity; one of the students expresses this idea in the following form: "The new Russian woman? She ... falls on every man who wants her" (m-17-tech).

The new Russian man's publicity acquires a different dynamic. In this case the publicity is somewhat *excluding*; the proliferation of the chain of the signifiers the new Russian man relies upon is restricted, is limited, is (b)locked by a small circle of consumers able to participate in the same style of consumption. Publicity here stands in for *flamboyance*, for being noticed from a *distance*, for distinguishing one's self; for the point in question is not to be *available* but to be *seen*. As another student puts it: "The new Russian man is a man in a jeep with a phone-receiver glued to his head. He constantly tries to *show himself off* more than his new Russian friends and fellows" (m-20-avto). Unlike

the new Russian woman's, the publicity of the new Russian man does have a specifically targeted group: to be seen here is to be seen first and foremost by other new Russian men.

Thus, it seems to be justifiable to speak of two main features of the new Russian man's consumption reflected by the students – its stylistic, aesthetized, visible, and *impressive* nature on the one hand, and its semiotic, encoded, and *excluding* character, on the other.

When collecting the interviews in Barnaul in April 1997, I confronted this *publicly excluding* speech of new Russian men a couple of times. Once, during a lunch with my old classmate, now a lawyer who was closely connected with various factions of new Russian “business-men” and new Russian “Mafia,” I noticed that his golden cuff links had what looked like a strange combination of letters to me – “PC”. The letters had nothing to do with the name of the person – neither in its English nor in its Russian transcription. I asked him what this could possibly mean, and got a reply – “*Pierre Cardin*.”

The situation, I think, was symptomatic in several ways. The lawyer's choice was understandable – Pierre Cardin was the only French designer who managed to set up productive relations with the Soviet authorities, and his products were, if not everywhere present, then at least widely known during the time of state socialism. The PC golden cuff links in this respect functioned as a sign of the past in the present, as an indicator of one's access to the previously important goods. There is another dimension of this “past present continuous,” though. The self-presentation here, the manifestation of one's status and, presumably, one's identity happened via borrowing someone else's *name*. Possession of the object, or, rather, the object itself had here a tangential meaning. What was more important was the lawyer's ability to abbreviate in the already familiar symbols (PC), his lack of a proper name, of an ultimately distinguishing symbol. By compressing the

symbolic structure of the past, the man again was able to signify the achievements of the present. The symbolic consumption thus works on two planes simultaneously; a connection with the symbol of the past is retained, but the symbol itself gets encoded. But why is this attachment to the past so strong? In other words, why, while being able to spend money *mindlessly*, does the new Russian man spend it on pretty much *predictable* objects? And what then is so mindless about it?

The aesthetic differences between the *shaved-skull* and the *elegant* new Russian men that are described in the quotation above, should not hide their common quality, i.e., the man's preoccupying concern with the reflection(s) or the impression(s) he produces on other people. In the following comment a student develops further this idea of stylistic sensitivity of the new Russian man:

- *The new Russian man? I imagine a man in a long stylish coat, with a pager ... not because he needs that but solely in order to show himself off. These people are absolutely sure that each and every person should be admiring them. They have a high opinion about their own intellect and abilities. (f-17-fil).*

Interestingly enough, the tools with which – in the students' opinion – the new Russian men produce their reflections are strikingly similar. Regardless of whether they are male or female, humanities or technical students, the portraits they draw are the portraits of virtually the same person. Moreover, unlike the images of the new Russian woman, which are called upon to represent almost anything that could be termed “*new*,” the images of the new Russian man can hardly stand for anything “*new*” at all. The objects that distinguish the new Russian are strikingly similar to the status-objects used during the

Soviet time. To use a student's metaphor, more often than not the students perceive the new Russian as having the same old Pierre Cardin stuff, maybe with more gold in/on it.

Several quotations illustrate the point:

- *New Russian man – a 75-gram golden neck-chain, a 75-gram golden cross. A very expensive car, an expensive suit. Undoubtedly – a lot of intellect, common sense, and important connections. Very enterprising; with a tie for \$100. (m-18-tech).*
- *New Russian man – must have a cellular phone, a huge golden neck-chain, with a ring on each finger, with an expensive car. His wife is a doll in his hands; and he is always in 'touch' with the criminal groups. (m-22-avto).*
- *A new Russian man – a shaved back of his head, his body is a mountain of muscles; with a slightly dumb expression on his face; lots of golden decorations; a cellular phone is a must. When talking, he likes to discuss only one topic – money; that is – how he earns it and how he spends it. (f-20-ir).*

Almost all the components of the *new* Russian man listed here in one way or another contain traces of the previous Soviet epoch. During the period of state socialism, golden decorations were traditionally thought of as being the *ultimate* representation of one's prosperity and one's successful investment of money. I remember at the end of the 1980s when people were desperately trying to spend their money on something whose value would survive the economic changes, the biggest jeweler store in my Siberian home town decided to impose a limit on purchasing gold merchandise – in order to reduce the crowd in the store. The limit was no more than two golden items (usually neck-chains, seldom –

rings or earring) per customer.⁵ The same rule applies to cars as status objects. In Soviet times having a car was not just a sign of one's financial situation (cars were expensive). It was also a manifestation of one's ability either to get through all the bureaucratic obstacles in order to be able to buy it, or it was a sign of one's access to the important connections through which the car could be purchased without several years of waiting. Even the famous signature of the new Russians – the cellular phone – is nothing but a modified version of the '*hot-line*' phones that used to connect the local party officials with their bosses in Moscow via a special – *exclusive!* – switch board.

The students make it clear in their essays that it is not the *novelty* of the things that transform an old Russian into a *new* one. What is it then? Apparently, it is the *mindless quantity* of the things that the students use as the group's marker: the *number* of rings ("*on every finger*"), the *weight* of the neck-chain ("*huge*"), the *price* of the car, of a suit, or of a tie ("*very expensive*"); the *mass* of muscles ("*a mountain*", "*overdosed with steroids*"); and the *amount* of the intellect ("*a lot*"). In other words, it seems that in the students' perception the ideology or, rather, aesthetics of success corresponds – if not coincides – with the ideology and aesthetics of excess, not with the ideology and aesthetics of novelty or sophistication. A female student with a background in literature transforms this binary of the new Russian *bounty* vs. Soviet *shortage* into the opposition of the new Russian man's *extremes* vs. the Soviet man's *ordinariness*:

- *A typical [Soviet] man is a man who could be hardly distinguished in a crowd, that is, he is of average height, average intellect; he is, generally speaking, an*

⁵ Significantly enough, back in the Soviet Union, as well as now – in the students' essays – diamonds were not included in this symbolic exchange, nor were silver decorations. Both types of jewelry were a part of a different life-style – predominantly the intellectuals' and artistic elite's – and were not as symbolically transparent as the golden decorations.

"arithmetic-mean man." When he comes home from his job, he occupies the couch – to read newspapers and watch TV. He is a pessimist who constantly thinks how to provide his family with all the necessary things. When at home he wears sweat-pants that have lost their shape a long time ago; in fact, his wardrobe is far from being designed by Pierre Cardin and this, actually, does not really bother him. His main hobbies are fishing, hunting, soccer, in other words – nothing interesting.

- *New Russian man – a crimson suit, a golden neck-chain; he is very ambitious and has inflated demands/desires. But he knows how to get around and earn money using all available means. (f-17-fil)*

In other words, the "old" Soviet man is short of everything – height, intellect, money, shape, interests, and, implicitly, power; as another student put it: "A Soviet man is a hardly noticeable, tiny and weak human creature" (f-17-tech). The new Russian man is the direct opposite of that, and the word "*inflated*" in the student's description is of a key significance. It is this "above average-ness," this transgression of the borders of mediocrity or the limits of the "necessary" things that seem to distinguish one man from the other. Thus excess and exaggeration become distinctively new Russian, and particularly *male*, in the students' essays.

It is important to see an essential difference between the exaggerated and/or idealized images of the new Russian woman with which I dealt in the previous chapter, and that of the inflated masculinity of the new Russian man. Despite all its negativity and drawbacks, the new Russian man is not usually seen as threatening; he might be annoying, bothersome, dull, or rude, but hardly *abjectionable*. The new Russian man is not a tragic character, nor even a dramatic one. Quite often he is just a character who is trying to adapt himself to a new situation – with graceful success or awkward failure.

Apparently, it is precisely the attempts of the new Russian man to find his place in a new situation, to make sense out of his own location through the objects whose meaning is familiar to him, that have become the matter of endless jokes to which the students referred. And yet, what is comical in these jokes is, again, the quantitative rather than qualitative aspects of situations. The logic of the comic seems to follow this chain: "I have more than you *do*" – "I have more than you *think* I do" – and finally – I have more than you *can even think* of." The following joke, quite popular in Russia a couple of years ago, is a good example of this:

A new Russian's son approaches a gorgeous lady in a lobby of five-star Metropol hotel in Moscow.

- Mind a stroll? he volunteers.

- Well, I bet your car ain't a Volvo, - she replies.

- Nope, it is not, - he confides.

- And you do not own even an average size bank, - she continues.

- Nope, he admits again.

- And you do not have a three-story house in Old Arbat [a prestigious district next to the Kremlin], she concludes. He agrees again.

- Then get lost, loser!

The lady leaves and the chap stands in distressed puzzlement.

- I can trade my Saab 900 for a Volvo, - he muses himself, - and I can split my financial trust into a chain of average-size banks, but I obviously can't talk my father into demolishing the top three floors of our Old Arbat residence...

Besides its quantitative aspect, the joke's restricted list of status-symbols is close to the students' vision of the new Russian man. Just as in their essays, the joke does not cross the limits of already established symbolic borders (*car-flat-savings*). That is, the plane on which the status objects are located here is the same – the plane of material

possessions reflecting their Soviet origin, indicating the “taste of necessity” (even if “inflated”), not the “taste of luxury.”⁶ In other words, the breakthrough to a different symbolic language able to adequately express a new *social location* does not happen here. Nor does a new way to express one’s *financial wealth* appear. Instead, time and again we see how the same rhetorical device of *exaggeration of the already familiar* is used in order to present someone whose economic and social position is understood to be much higher than that of the students or the audience of the joke. Time and again the students try to solve the conflict between the low status of the objects of the new Russian man and his high social position via the same device – the inflated price of the consumer goods.

Bourdieu may provide us with yet another clue to understanding this lack of the symbolic breakthrough in the students’ comments. In *Distinction*, describing the patterns of the *working class* cultural consumption Bourdieu points out that when the need to impress someone arises, it is realized via increasing the *quantity*, not the quality of the product.⁷ The question now is, what do the working class cultural habits have in common with the new Russian elite? In the following section I will try to explain the logic of this seemingly unnatural combination. In order to do that I will use such concepts as the *field of restricted cultural production*, the *field of large-scale cultural production*, and the *effect of homologies* developed by Pierre Bourdieu.

THE MATTER OF SIZE

Let me recall for a moment Bourdieu’s distinction between the taste of luxury and the taste of necessity. As the sociologist argues, it is exactly the configuration of this

⁶ Bourdieu (1989), p.177.

⁷ Ibid., p.194-95.

opposition that defines the differences in the area of consumption and acquisition.⁸ The main characteristics of these two types of tastes express in various versions the level of the subject's dependence on the material conditions of existence. While the taste of luxury reflects an individual's ability to move beyond consumption limited by the satisfaction of one's primary needs, the taste of necessity represents one's having to adjust his or her aesthetic views to the reality of daily demands. From this point of view, the juxtaposition of the Soviet man's *ordinariness* vs. the new Russian man's *excessiveness* perfectly demonstrates the student's understanding of the structural difference between luxury and necessity. The issue is, why is luxury understood as a person's ability to have ten *golden rings* instead of one with a *diamond*? Or even simple – why have rings at all?

The concept of homologies and their effects is helpful in this situation. Describing the way in which the symbolic (i.e., the cultural) and the economic (e.g., the financial) relate to each other, Bourdieu paints a picture where these relations in fact replicate each other, repeat each other, albeit in different domains. The hierarchy of tastes and goods within the domain of culture corresponds to an adequate hierarchy of property and power relations within the domain of economy. Thus, the position of the subject within the field of cultural production reflects, mirrors, and reproduces his or her position within the field of economic (and political) power. It is this mirroring effect of the field of cultural production that Bourdieu defines as "homological."⁹ In his essay "*The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods*," he writes:

⁸ Ibid., p.177.

⁹ See: Bourdieu P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.44-45.

Through the logic of homologies, the practices and works of agents in a specialized, relatively autonomous field of production are necessarily *overdetermined*; the functions they fulfill in the internal struggles are inevitably accompanied by external functions, which are confirmed on them in the symbolic struggles among the fractions of the dominant class and, in the long run, at least, among the classes.¹⁰

In other words, the institutionalization of the *new Russian* elite, its struggle with other politically and economically powerful groups, is to be confirmed by its corresponding institutionalization within the field of symbolic representations. To put this another way, the economic power of the new Russian men had to be transformed in the students' essays into a homological field of cultural production typical for this group. However, with the rare exception of the elegant new Russian gentleman, this field of the new Russian cultural *production*, the field of distinctively new Russian *objects*, is absent in the students' comments. Moreover, even the scarce descriptions of the "stylish gentleman" are remarkably silent about his cultural preferences: it remains unclear in which cultural practices and objects his elegance finds its outlet.

Ideally speaking, one of the ways whereby the students *could* have distinguished the new Russian man could be through his ideological – i.e., post-Socialist, post-Soviet – difference. There is, however, a problem with using ideological means to justify the new Russians' economic supremacy. The homological field of the new Russian ideological beliefs and symbols from which the students could have borrowed their descriptions hardly exists in Russia. In that respect, the new Russians differ significantly from their predecessors, the political dissidents. After a long-term period of ideological struggle with

¹⁰ Bourdieu (1993), p. 53

the Soviet state, the latter were finally capable of producing a more or less effective ideological machine – with *samizdat* as their communication tool and with anti-Soviet and mainly pre-socialist symbols as their cultural repository. The new Russians had neither the same amount of time nor the same library of distinctive symbolic goods.

This objective situation might explain to a certain degree why the students used the same Soviet status-objects to portray an essentially different consumer group: the objects the students chose, while being Soviet, were not socialist; while being widely used to indicate one's status, they were not, however, used to manifest one's ideological preferences. The same logic seems to be true in regard to the other side of the coin, i.e., in regard to the emphasis that students put on the new Russians' cultural *consumption*. Unlike in the case of the dissidents, the message now is to be read not in *what* is being said or consumed but *how*, or rather, in *what quantity*.

Thus, it seems that the students understand very well the effect of homologies described by Bourdieu, i.e., the necessary link between the social/economic location of the new Russian subject and his or her cultural tastes. However, the absence of the institutionalized field producing the new Russian culture forced the students to make a logical move – from the symbolically vague field of *economic production* to the symbolically transparent field of *cultural consumption*, thereby missing altogether the field of the *cultural production* that is supposed to deliver new symbols. The students' accent on quantity has its roots precisely in the missing link of the culturally productive field. For consumption can be communicative (e.g., signifying) as long as one pattern of it differs from another one. Only under this condition can consumption function as an example of the "symbolic struggles to appropriate distinctive signs in the form of classified, classifying goods or practices, or to conserve or subvert the principles of classification of these

distinctive properties,”¹¹ as Bourdieu puts it. The difficulty emerges when one attempts to make the goods, or signs, that have been widely used before look distinctive. By establishing a field of what could be called a “*restricted large-scale*” cultural production, the students overcame this difficulty.

As is well known, Bourdieu distinguishes between the field of *restricted* cultural production and the field of *large-scale* cultural production. Briefly, the main difference between the two consists in the different types of consumers the fields are targeting. The field of restricted cultural production is “objectively destined for a public of producers of cultural goods,” while the field of large-scale cultural production aims at “the public at large.”¹² To state this differently, the function of the *restricted* cultural production is to maintain the symbolic boundaries of the “lucky few,” while the task of the *large-scale* cultural production is to increase the profit of the producer(s). Control over access to the cultural products of the restricted field is the main condition of its existence: the (un)availability of the goods produced within this circle is ensured by control over the “rarity of the instruments with which they may be deciphered.”¹³ Correspondingly, the popularity of the large-scale cultural production is secured by the constant reproduction of the standardized forms of cultural perception.

This binary scheme works perfectly well when applied to a society with a stable social structure and, consequently, a stable cultural hierarchy with the “*legitimate*” (i.e., aspired to) cultural objects on the top, the “*popular*” (i.e., despised) cultural products at the bottom, and the “*middle-brow*” (i.e., tacitly admitted) objects between them.¹⁴ The

¹¹ Bourdieu (1989), p.249.

¹² Bourdieu (1993), p.114.

¹³ Ibid., p.120

¹⁴ In “*Distinction*,” speaking about patterns of art consumption, Bourdieu gives a three-dimensional hierarchy of tastes which “roughly” corresponds to the educational and financial hierarchies of social

complication arises when the scheme is used to describe the society going through a stage of comprehensive transformation. Thus, the new Russian man in the crimson suit with a huge golden neck-chain and a cellular phone in his hand with a ring on each finger presents a certain paradox. In this case, the possession of certain goods that belong to the field of large-scale cultural production is meant to represent one's belonging to the top of the economic hierarchy, that is, to the restricted circle of the "lucky few."

Several factors play an important role in this process of turning *large-scale* production into *restricted* production. One of them reflects the changes in culture in general; the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the state socialism significantly undermined (at least in the first half of the 1990s) the then-existing cultural hierarchies of taste. In other words, what Bourdieu calls the *Legitimate taste* was discredited politically and thus lost its classifying attraction. In the situation of cultural vacuum the top of hierarchy was gradually occupied by *Popular* and *Middle Brow* tastes. This process was accelerated by a rapid circulation of elites themselves, which prevented a *current-elite-in-power* from taking time and money-consuming measures in order to refine the instruments of their cultural consumption. It is not surprising then, that the main indicator of a person's high economic, social, or political status becomes the indicator traditionally used within the field of working class cultural consumption, that is, *abundance*, monetary abundance first of all. In a situation of the symbolic shortages, this monetary abundance manifests itself in the inflated prices of the limited number of status-objects. As a result of this, the taste of luxury, that is, one's distance from necessity begins

groups (he uses the term "classes"). Thus, there are: 1) the *Legitimate taste*, i.e., the "taste for legitimate works"; 2) the *Middle-brow taste*, i.e., the taste for minor works of the major arts; and 3) the *Popular taste*, i.e., the taste for widely popularized and broadly consumed art (Bourdieu (1989), p.16). The scheme could certainly be extended well beyond the limits of art consumption only.

to express itself in one's ability *to have more* of the same thing and *to pay more* for the same thing. The rules of the field of *restricted* production are imposed on the field of *large-scale* production creating as a result of that a field of *restricted large-scale* production. The following joke is a perfect example of this logic:

Two new Russians meet, and one asks:

- Hey Vasia, where did you get your nice tie?

- At the Valentino store. Cost me \$2000.

- Phew, the other says with contempt, ... I know a place where you could get exactly the same tie for \$5000!¹⁵

The portrait of the new Russian man with a ring on each finger and a heavy golden cross on his neck certainly belongs to the same field of *restricted large-scale* production. Being limited by the number of signifiers, the students chose to increase the value of already familiar objects. By inflating the price, that is, by over-estimating the objects, they in fact, shift the emphasis from *value* to *cost*, from the stylistic dimensions of the new Russian objects to their positions on the price-list or to the position of their owner within the field of production. In this moment, wealth/power becomes unmediated, that is, non-symbolized, and the students' discourse on the new Russian man's consumption choice is replaced by a discourse on the new Russian man's money. The following quotation, for example, is remarkable for the absence of any concrete objects that the new Russian man

¹⁵ There are more anecdotal cases of the same logic. Recently one of the Russian newspapers described the way the concert of Pavarotti was organized as a part of the celebration of Moscow's 850th anniversary. The concert was held on the Red Square; however, only six thousand people representing the Russian political, economic and cultural elite attended it. All of them, as the newspaper says, were given free tickets. Pavarotti was paid the same honorarium as he would receive for singing in a 100,000-seat stadium (\$1,000,000). The large-scale production, thus, was lifted to the level of the culturally exclusive event by limiting physical access to it. (See: *Argumenti i facti* (1998) No15, April)

buys; his “power to buy *things*” in student’s imagination is reduced to an abstract “power to buy *all the possible*.”

- *The new Russian man is a very enterprising person who makes enough money to buy presents and all possible things for his wife and relatives, as well as friends abroad; he also can go abroad for expensive vacations. Almost everything in his life is reduced to money... (f-21-ir)*

Another student adds to this: “The new Russian man is a man who can earn good money and who likes to show how well he lives and how fully he enjoys his life.” (m-21-avto)

Yet another student displaces her symbolic exasperation onto the new Russian man: “He likes to discuss only one topic – money, how he earns it and how he spends it” (f-20-ir).

The cycle *Money-Goods-Money*, thus, seems to be perfectly completed. Having exhausted the symbolic potential of their Soviet past, the students regress to the primal signifier, with the *inflated size* as its primary source distinction.¹⁶

There might be yet another, complementary, explanation of the students’ preoccupation with the physical parameters of the new Russian consumption. To outline it, in the remaining part of this chapter I want to make a short detour to Freud. In his book on jokes, he indicates that in order to be pleasurable, the joke must found itself in the operation of *comparison*. Thus, for example, he writes about the origin of the comic:

¹⁶ It is hardly surprising that none of the students mentioned such a common attribute of the new Russian men’s as personal bodyguards. The already mentioned poll conducted by *Izvestia*, for example, defines this indicator as *the most important* in the hierarchy of the new Russian symbols (77% of respondents), followed by “a cottage in suburbia” (76%) (*Izvestia*, (1998), April 22). The absence of the bodyguards in the Soviet period of the students’ life as well as the impossibility of fitting the guards into rhetoric frame of “size” might explain the absence of this symbol in the students’ descriptions. The importance of expensive clothes in this poll occupies the last line and is mentioned only by 33% of 1130 respondents.

a person appears comic to us if, in comparison with ourselves, he makes too great an expenditure on his bodily functions and too little on his mental ones; and it cannot be denied that in both these cases our laughter expresses a pleasurable sense of the superiority which we feel in relation to him.¹⁷

Two elements are important in this conclusion about jokes dealing with the “*quantitative* factor” as Freud calls it,¹⁸ that is, with the amount of (intellectual and/or physical) energy invested in this or that action. First, the mechanism of the comic implies a temporary *identification* of the subject of speech (the joker) with his or her object of speech (the matter of the joke). In other words, multiple references to the jokes about the new Russian man the students have made in their essays certainly indicate a peculiar strategy of an imaginary relation with their main subject/object of jokes. The new Russian man apparently functions as a model of self which still needs some improvement; and the students’ emphasis on quantitative aspects could be understood as their way to displace or laugh off the model’s ostensible flaws. In other words, the identification here is seemingly built on the principle “I vs. *not-exactly-I*,” the identification’s completeness is not rejected (unlike in the case of the new Russian woman) but rather postponed, deferred. One of the students reflects this clearly: “I am not a new Russian yet,” a twenty-one year old man writes, “but I could become one” (m-21-avto).

Second, the pleasure of the comic in the “size”-jokes comes from the presupposition that one would do better had she or he happened to be in the same situation. As a result of this presupposition, identification with the subject is reinforced and even acquires a positive imaginary value. Sometimes this deferred identification gets

¹⁷ Freud, S. (1960) *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. W.W. Norton and Co: London, p.242.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.238.

displaced onto the figure of the new Russian woman, as is done, for example, in this quotation:

- *The new Russian man is a man who could earn good money.*
- *The new Russian woman is the new Russian man's wife who knows how to spend properly the money earned by her husband. I do not think that golden neck-chains and rings are the only distinguishing attributes of the new Russians. Every social group has its own bizarre distinctions. (f-17-fil)*

However, regardless of the ways of identification, it is important to notice that the suppressed feeling of superiority in regard to the new Russian man acts as a spring whose release makes the whole business of comparison enjoyable.

In "*The Narcissistic Screening*," I will develop this psychoanalytic train of thought further. For the purpose of the analysis in this chapter, however, it is important to keep in mind the connection between the incomplete identification and the emphasis on the "quantitative factor" outlined by Freud, that is, between the new Russian man, taken as a role-model, and the size of the signifiers prescribed to him by the students.

The sociological interpretation of the students' essays that I attempted to undertake in this chapter helps to realize the social mechanisms that underline the students' perception of the unfamiliar group and its patterns of consumption. Their imaginary constructions of the new Russian man seem to perform – albeit in a different form and on a different level – a function of "projective identification" (to borrow Melanie Klein's term for a moment), whereby the students locate their own habits and patterns of consumption in the place of the other. And this seems to be precisely the reason why in the students' essays the new Russian man is virtually the same old Russian who just has more stuff. By

inflating numbers, by increasing size, by enlarging amounts, the students tried to bridge an inevitable gap between the new Russian role-model and their own Soviet origin. And in doing so, they could not help but reproduce a conflict between an imaginarily acquired new Russian property and their Soviet (in)ability to use it.

Besides that, it is through the quantitative approach as the main tool of producing new Russian distinction that the students can equate the ideology of success with ideology of excess. The obvious binary *Soviet shortages* vs. *post-Soviet abundance*, involved in this rhetorical equation is only one part of the scheme. Its another component is the students' incapacity to use a different symbolic structure, a different universe of the status-objects. Lacking in the symbolic means able to represent the new Russian man's wealth, the students seemingly confront two choices – either to get rid of the “golden” chain of signifiers altogether and be content with the golden neck-chain as such instead, thereby making money the (primary) object of discourse. Or to learn a new language that would offer a post-Soviet signifier adequate to the post-Soviet meaning. In the following chapter I will show how the choice the students face with could be interpreted from a psychoanalytic perspective.

THE NEW RUSSIAN MAN:

●●●● The Narcissistic Screening

...how do we differentiate between the concepts of narcissism and egoism? Well, narcissism, I believe, is the libidinal component to egoism.

Sigmund Freud¹

To describe the new Russia? Well, all of a sudden a lot of business-men appeared. With ties and business cases. People start dressing differently, more casually and relaxed. And a lot of restaurants are now out there...

A student (f-18-tech).

In *The Fatal Splitting* I tried to interpret students' comments about the new Russian woman mostly through the prism of Melanie Klein's concept of splitting and Julia Kristeva's idea of abjection. By creating a (hostile) phantasy of the new Russian woman, I argued, the students were able to displace their fear of the social, economic, political, and cultural chaos. Similar to the artistic phantasies in *Fin-de-Siecle* Europe, the new Russian femme fatale – either as a Venus in furs, or as an “iron” business-woman – has become a sign and a symptom of changing borders of traditional gender, class and national identity in post-Soviet Russia.

As I mentioned, unlike the students' images of the new Russian woman, the images of the new Russian man seemingly perform differently colored ideological and – more importantly – psychological functions. In this chapter, I will try to explore the reasons for this gender distinctiveness in the construction of images. As I will argue, by

¹ Freud, S. (1966) “The libido theory and narcissism”. In: Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. New York – London: W.W. Norton, p.417.

endowing the (images of the) new Russian man with a narcissistic structure, the students are able to restore what can be called a bi-polar world of primary identification: with the pole of "pain" personified by the new Russian woman and the pole of "pleasure" personified by the new Russian man. In other words, with the object (the Mother) and with the subject (the child) of attachment.

As before, in this chapter I will use the students' comments as my main textual material; in addition to this, however, I will rely heavily on the examples taken from contemporary Russian popular culture, namely, the newly emerging industry of glossy magazines for men. I believe that such a combination could help to bring together the realm of *personal* phantasies and the realm of what Erving Goffman called the "*commercially organized* phantasies of the nation,"² i.e., this would help to see to what extent these two domains influence, contradict, or correspond to each other.

THE NAVEL OF THE WORLD

Until now I have used primarily sociological arguments to analyze the reasons that underlie the students' comments about the excessive consumption of the new Russian man. By developing the concept of the *restricted large-scale* cultural production I argued that the scarcity of the symbolic means available to the students was a main reason for their images of the new Russian men's exaggerated and repetitive over-consumption. In spite of some sociological and social evidences for this phenomenon, I do not think that it

² Goffman, E. (1990) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin Book, p.41; italics mine.

could be explained by the field of sociological facts and theory only. Given the persistence with which the students quoted these “instances” of excessive consumption, as well as the students’ almost complete blindness to any other forms of the new Russian men’s symbolic self-expression, I think it is reasonable to suggest that we are also dealing here with the same phantasmatic structure that was used to create the image of the new Russian woman. In other words, the new Russian man portrayed by the students is called upon to meet a certain psychological need. The question is: what kind of need is it?

The students’ opinions about the unrestrained consumption patterns of the new Russian men quite often contain a parallel theme about the allegedly tremendous level of the new Russians’ self-evaluation, about their extreme self-confidence and high social status. The new Russian man is depicted in these comments as “the navel of the world,”³ as one student puts it (f-20-ir), that is, as the one who, in fact, polices, controls, or, at least, represents the trace of one’s (former) pivotal connection with, vitally important sources. It is hardly an accident that this trace – the navel – implicitly refers to another figure standing behind the new Russian man – his mother. I will come back to this disguised “anatomical” or, rather “maternal,” metaphor of the new Russian in a moment, but now I would like to emphasize another aspect of this “navelty” of the new Russian man, namely, his typical self-aggrandizement. A female student, for example, gives the following gradation of types of man:

- *Typical man – indistinguishable in the crowd – 175 cm. high, skinny, with a short standard hair-cut, dressed the same way as all the other typical men are. He is always tired and unsatisfied. He always wants everything; he smokes on his walk and could spit wherever he likes.*

³ In a less idiosyncratic form the same idea is usually formulated as “the center of the world.”

- *Soviet man – a fatty, balding, fussy man. His work is his most important thing in the world. He would never turn down a glass of vodka or an extra meal.*
- *The new Russian man – a self-adoring idiot who thinks if he has money he is allowed to do anything. He has everything he could have – a lot of money, several flats, a jeep, saunas; and a never-ending fear that he could lose all that at once. These men know nothing about “LOVE”. (f-17-fil)*

The stylistic differences are important here, but what is more important in these descriptions is a binary where the *unsatisfied desire* of a typical (and a) Soviet man (“he always wants”; “he would never turn down something”) is juxtaposed to the new Russian man’s *sense of self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction* (“he has everything he could have”) combined with the despising and/or fear of the external world. By using Freud’s concept of narcissism in what follows I want to explore the identificatory functions of this image in the students’ essays.

In his lecture on “*Libido Theory and Narcissism*” Freud describes mechanisms of such different forms of paranoia as megalomania, persecution mania, erotomania, delusions related to jealousy, and so on. Speaking about megalomania, Freud indicates:

According to our analytic view the megalomania is the direct result of a magnification of the ego due to drawing in of the libidinal object-cathexes – a secondary narcissism which is a return of the originally infantile one.⁴

To state the same idea more simply – megalomania is a form of narcissistic identification in which the ego is inflated by the libido that is attached to it. The important points to notice are the *paranoid* structure of narcissism, and a *metamorphosis* (inflation) of the ego that happens during the narcissistic stage. There are two questions to ask: “Why and how does

⁴ Freud, S. (1966), p.424.

this inflation happen?" and "How could this process of the ego-aggrandizement be related to the students' comments?" The questions are not as different as they might seem.

Speaking about the new Russian woman, I have already quoted Freud's view on the distinctive feature of the psychotic (paranoid) structure. When due to a historical trauma the subject's patterns of identification (i.e., "attachment of the libido," or "libidinal object-cathexes") are disrupted, the subject finds a *substitute* for the object of his or her attachment in his or her own *self*. In other words, in the case of paranoia, the liberated libido becomes "attached to the ego"⁵ and manifests itself in various forms of explicit or implicit self-amplification. From that point of view, the students' images of the new Russian man, the multiple references to the "inflated" – as one student puts it – size, amount, and numbers of his consumption habits could be seen as performing the function of the ego-projection that has been theoretically elaborated by Klein. Namely, having defined the new Russian woman as the object of abjection that demarcates the subject's borders (i.e., as the *one-who-is-not-me*), the students confront the problem of a second identification. Apparently, the figure of the (phallic) new Russian man in that respect manages to become a "substitute" for the students' ego, so to speak, that is, to function as the *"one-who-is-not-yet-me."* If this is true, then the megalomaniac phantasies associated with the new Russian man, his alleged sense of self-confidence and belief in his own rightness have a well-grounded explanation. The purpose of these phantasies is to create a protective shield that would defend the ego from the uncertainty left behind by the lost object of attachment. Thus, the universe of the new Russian man with a limited

⁵ Freud, S. (1991) "Psychoanalytic notes on autobiographical account of a case of paranoia (dementia paranoides) (1911). In: Freud, S. *Case Histories II*. The Penguin Freud Library. Vol.9. London" Penguin Books, p.211.

number of his goods—satellites permanently re-producing themselves, is the site onto which to project the anxiety caused by the emptied ego. In the following comment, a student speaking about the new Russia implicitly shows how a sense of disorder could be – at least partially – “normalized” by the rhetoric of the financial stability of the new Russian men:

- *For me the new Russia is associated with murky times. Dark forces – greed and cruelty – get unleashed. In front of beaten-up, completely dependent people a perspective of a fairy-tale (i.e., democratic, law-based, etc.) society has been opened. What has come out of this? You can see it yourself. It is unjust to treat the mentality of several generations this way. First for ages people had been forced not to look beyond their own nose, and then all of a sudden they were thrown into the white-water of the market economy that expects them to be courageous, creative, and able to take risks and to foresee the outcomes. However, having understood that in this situation of chaos combined with freedom big money could be easily made, certain groups of people quickly found their way around. These groups are the new Russians... The main principles of these people's lives could be formulated as: “we should have a beautiful life”... and “when I am gone everything may fall apart.” (f-19-ir)*

To some degree, in this and the other comments that will follow the new Russian man acts as a person who knows what is to be done in the situation when no one else does, that is, how to make money. It is important to notice that neither here nor in the other comments do students say *why* the new Russian man does the things that he thinks are necessary to do. The motivation for his activity seems to be rather instrumental: just do it and do not ask questions! Another student's comment shows how the monetary core of the new Russian man finds its operational form, i.e., how the chaos and lack of constraints

in post-Soviet *society* are transformed into the lack of constraints within *the field of consumption*. Significantly enough, while imagining a situation of totally unrestrained consumption, the student does not ground it in any concrete object:

- *The new Russia – it is the absolute absence of any constraints; it is a conflict between the “old” and the “new,” a conflict of generations. There is almost a universal poverty, but at the same time – a freedom to choose. If you have money, you could do anything... (m-18-tech)*

However, the possibility to do or, rather, to choose almost “anything” takes on a peculiar form in the students’ comments about the new Russian man – in fact he does *not* choose a lot. As has been shown, more often than not the choice of the things/goods the new Russian man is “left” with is very much limited. And, as I want to argue, this picture of the restrained and unimaginative consumption in a situation of open possibilities, this emphasis on its *quantitative* aspects at the expense of the *qualitative* one, indicates a certain problem in the students’ relation with reality.

Jacques Lacan’s concept of the Symbolic can provide us with a clue to understanding this problem. As is well known, Lacan connected a person’s mastery within the realm of the Symbolic (i.e., within the domain of symbolic *exchange*) with one’s desire of the Other, that is, of the addressee whose (imaginary) existence makes one’s own desire meaningful. Lacan states this unequivocally:

Development only takes place in so far as the subject integrates himself into the symbolic system, acts within it, asserts himself in it through the use of genuine speech.⁶

⁶ Lacan, J. (1991) “The topic of the imaginary.” Lacan J. *The Seminars. Book 1: Freud's papers on technique. 1953-54*. London: W. W. Norton, p.86.

It seems to me, however, that in students' comments about the new Russian man, it is precisely this type of development that gets somewhat arrested. The integration of their texts into a broader system of symbolic exchange either does not succeed here at all and thus remains *past* Soviet rather than *post*-Soviet. Or this integration is accomplished only partially: having exhausted the symbolic possibilities of the golden neck-chains and not being able to make any other symbolic move, the students usually would flee to one option only. That is, they express the omnipotence of the new Russian man's wealth with the discourse on money as such. For example, confronting the limits of her vocabulary, a student describes a new Russian man in this way: "He likes to discuss only one topic – money, how he earns it and how he spends it" (f-20-ir). Another student extends this approach to describe – somewhat bitterly – the whole country:

- *The new Russia? – I associate this notion with a lot pain and heartlessness. Everything is for sale; everything is being either bought or stolen. Tramps, refugees, tradesmen are everywhere. (m-20-avto)*

When analyzing the students' view of the new Russian man's consumption patterns, I indicated that in spite of the heavy symbolic function played by the financial, or monetary, component in the new Russian man's identity, his participation in buying and selling, that is, his role within the field of the symbolic transactions is very limited. Unlike the new Russian woman who constantly objectifies her presence on the market (I used the formula *Goods → Money → Goods* to describe her type of circulation), the new Russian man, as presented by the students, does not *buy* things but rather *spends* money, thus constantly experiencing a lack of symbolic balance between the desire to express (himself) and the form the expression takes, that is, between the signified and the signifier. By using

a different formula for the new Russian man's circulation of the market: (*Money* → *Goods* → *Money*), I tried to schematize the students' logic that allows the new Russian man to avoid being completely introduced into the symbolic exchange of values.

These formulas, however, could be interpreted on a more symbolic level – for example, in terms of Lacanian “realms.” If the new Russian woman circulates mostly within the realm of the Symbolic exchange (i.e., “*Goods*”, or “realized” opportunities) with periodical slippage into the realm of the Imaginary projections (i.e., “*Money*”, i.e., “anticipated” possibilities), then the new Russian man's circulation is rather different, being predominantly confined by the frame of the Imaginary (i.e., “*Money*”). In a different form, a student expresses the same idea: “the new Russian man is a man who has power and a lot of money – quite often earned illegally – but who does not really know what to do with his money” (m-19-tech). This interpretation, in a sense, makes clear why the students did not use the oppositions “*selling* vs. *buying*” or “*public* vs. *private*” to describe the new Russian man. Instead they employed different versions of the opposition “*small amount* vs. *big amount*” thus leaving the new Russian man to circulate predominantly within the same (financial) domain. For, unlike in the new Russian woman's case, the point here does not seem to be about getting oneself successfully situated on the market, that is, getting commodified, but rather about avoiding the circulation, the exchange of values on the market altogether.

The students' restraint in describing the symbolic capabilities of the new Russian man could be also understood from the point of view of ego development. Melanie Klein in her paper on symbol formation points out that the child's identification with the object arises out of the child's “endeavor to rediscover in every object his own organs and their

functioning.”⁷ By relying on the pleasure principle as his or her psychological foundation, the child thus is able to symbolically equate different objects that produce the same gratifying effect. This ability to *project* a gratifying feeling onto/into various objects is of pivotal importance for the child’s development, as Klein suggests. For, “it is by way of symbolic equation that things, activities and interests become the subject of libidinal phantasies.”⁸ What happens with the process of the symbol formation when a person is not capable of extending his or her list of symbolic equations? Klein points out that this situation “may lead to a compulsive tie to certain objects or – another outcome – to a shrinking from people in order to prevent both a destructive intrusion in them and the danger of retaliation by them.”⁹ This definition appears to be fully applicable to the images of that familiar subject, namely, the new Russian man, with his endlessly repeated “600th Mercedes, cellular phone, golden neck-chain” (m-17-tech), as well as with his “always present fear that one day he could lose all that” (f-17-fil), that is, he could lose it to *someone else*. This leads to another question: what is the name of the type of the object-relation that Klein is talking about? It is hardly surprising that she defines this type of attachment as *narcissistic*. Let me pause here.

As has been said, the narcissistic inclination to withdraw from the “outer world,” or, as Freud puts it, to fixate “the libido to the subject’s own body and personality instead of an object,”¹⁰ – to use the student’s metaphor, to fixate on one’s navel – is traditionally understood as a manifestation of the subject’s inability to set up a fulfilling, satisfactory

⁷ Klein, M. (1986) “The Importance of symbols formation in the development of the ego.” In: Klein, M. *The Selected*. Ed. by Juliet Mitchell. London” Penguin books, p.97.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁹ Klein, M. (1975) “Notes on some schizoid mechanisms.” In: *The Writings of Melanie Klein*. Vol. III. *Envy and Gratitude and Other works*. New York: The Free Press, p.13

¹⁰ Freud, S. (1966), p.424; p.416.

relationship with the environment he or she is inhabiting. This interpretation of narcissism gave rise to describing it as a “narcissistic *regression*” as a strategic move called upon to restore the condition of the “*primary*” narcissism, the primary unity of the mother and the child.

If we are to believe this interpretation of narcissism as a withdrawal caused by a “historical trauma,” as a result of one’s inability to establish a stable and satisfying *symbolic* relation with the “outer world,” then the phantasmatic structure presented in the students’ essays seems to be perfectly logical and complete. That is, the femme fatale, the archaic mother, the new Russian woman could not have any other *counterpart-ner* but the narcissistic new Russian man. In these two figures, the two poles of identification find their personifications – with the abjected mother on one of them and the autistic and pleasure-seeking (new Russian) child on the other. By creating these two poles, the students thus frame the range of their possible identificatory models. It is not surprising then, that the new Russia itself – the place of the new Russian child’s existence – is also seen in many comments as an unrestrained child: the projective identification does it works here, too. The following quotation illustrates the point:

- *How would I define the new Russia? For me it is all about too liberated, unbound, rude and impolite children. And the adults, who themselves are not too far away from these kids. “Everything is permissible!” ...the new Russia is like an unconstrained kid. But this kid is much more happy than the ones whom he succeeded. (f-18-fil).*

Locating the students’ fantasies about the new Russian man within the frame of the narcissistic structure makes explicit the reasons for their impaired symbolic capability,

which is projected onto the body of the new Russian man. For, as Julia Kristeva convincingly suggests, the narcissistic withdrawal might be understood as something else besides a withdrawal towards the stage where the pain of primary separation has not happened yet. This type of regression can also be seen as an attempt to flee to the symbolic structures and patterns that used to provide the subject with a certain level of comfort and confidence ("happiness") in his or her relations to the world. Thus, the students' difficulty in proliferating the images of the new Russian man's desire (i.e., of their own) is a good example of what Kristeva calls the "phantasmatic inhibition" of the narcissistic man,¹¹ that is, his lacking of the "language of the phantasmatic narrative,"¹² or, otherwise, his experiencing of the language as "empty," or "artificial,"¹³ or "borrowed." The "inability" of the new Russian man to shift from the increasing weight of the golden neck-chain¹⁴ to, let's say, collecting cars, reflects the students' "frozen" imagination, as Kristeva calls it, reflected in their inability to speak a *new* language of desire. For narcissism, as Klein, Kristeva, and Lacan all indicate, is the product of the same paranoid structure which gave birth to the idealized/abjected mother. Both phenomena have the same root – a historical trauma that resulted in a gap, a hole, in the dominant fiction, in a discrepancy between the signified and the signifier; both reflect the same process – one's lost ability to match the world of words one has with the world of things one has to confront. This inability of the students to symbolically grasp the "world of things" is clearly reflected in the following comments:

¹¹ Kristeva J. (1995) *The New Maladies of the Soul*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p.10.

¹² Ibid., p.10.

¹³ Ibid., p.9.

¹⁴ It is interesting to see how students try to present increase in value as an increase in weight. The golden-chain could be a "finger-thick" (f-18-tehn), or it could weigh "75-gram" (m-18-tehn), "one-kilo" (m-20-avto), and, finally, "five-kilo" (m-18-tehn).

- *The new Russia is a country where everybody thinks about him— or herself only; it is a country drown in the sea of lying and corruption; where people, having lost their faith in the future, do not understand what is going on. (f-17-tech)*

What is interesting in this comment is precisely the student's experience of the social and political changes, and the problems caused by these changes, as changes in the symbolic meaning. The country's transformation has resulted in a distortion ("lying" and "corruption") of the dominant narratives, it has left people with no notions adequate to the on-going transformations, no symbolic map onto which to picture this transformation. It is not surprising that on the personal level, that is, on the level of the students' phantasies about the new Russian man, this *aphasia*, this symbolic impotence, is understood as a loss of the self. One of the students, for example, writes that the new Russian man is someone who "has lost a part of himself" (f-21-ir); another student adds, – new Russian man is someone who "does not cease to try to find his self" (f-17-tech), presumably, in order to repair the signifying hole.

There is, however, a difference between the paranoid phantasy about the new Russian Femme Fatale and the new Russian Narcissus. The obsessional attachment to a limited number of signifying objects prescribed to the new Russian man is called upon here as a form of protection, not as a form of aggression. Protection from what? Kristeva's idea of narcissism as a shell that insulates the void inside it might provide an answer to this question.

(A)VOIDING THE SELF

To understand Kristeva's argument on the matter it is important to realize the difference between primary and secondary narcissisms, that is, the difference between the narcissism of the ideal-ego and the narcissism of the ego-ideal. Let me quote from a work where Freud made an attempt for the first time to distinguish between the ego-ideal and the ideal-ego without actually using the terms. In his paper *On Narcissism* Freud says:

As always where the libido is concerned, man... is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood; and when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgments, so that he can no longer retain this perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his [*ego-*] ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal [*-ego*].¹⁵

Several things are important here. First, it is crucial that the structure of one's ideal (that is, the ego-ideal) is rooted in the stage of primary narcissism: the ego-ideal is built out of remnant of the ideal-ego. It is this fact that, for example, allows Kristeva to speak of "narcissistic structuration" as of the "earliest juncture... whose spours" might be detected in the unconscious,¹⁶ or that gives Melanie Klein the reasons to locate narcissism within the frame of the paranoid-schizoid position.¹⁷ Second, it follows from Freud's quote that it is not the lost *object* of the primary narcissism that the subject is looking for in the later

¹⁵ Freud, S. (1995) "On Narcissism." In *The Freud Reader*. Ed. by P. Gay, London: Vintage, p.558.

¹⁶ Kristeva (1987) p.44.

¹⁷ Klein, M. (1975) "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms." p.13.

stages of his/her development. As the psychoanalyst suggests, it is the *lost narcissism* that is to be rediscovered; the newly found objects of attachment in this respect are important as long as they reproduce the same *sense* of narcissistic omnipotence that the subject once had. And finally, the dialectic of the pair "*one's ideal*" (that is, the ego-ideal) and "*one-as-one's-own-ideal*" (that is, the ideal-ego) is significant. With the help of Kleinian terms this could be framed as follows: by projecting good parts of one's self into/onto the outer world (that is, by projecting one's ideal-ego), the subject accomplishes two aims – he/she establishes the contacts with reality and he/she creates the basis for his or her super-ego. By transforming itself first into the ego-ideal, and then into the super-ego, the ideal-ego thus *eventually* assumes a function of control and is seen as an alienated one, or, more precisely, as an alienated one's self.¹⁸

As is well known, Freud himself did not see the two types of the ego as significantly different in terms of their *content*. Rather, it was the distinctive *positions* of these two types in the process of the ego's structuring that attracted Freud's attention.¹⁹ Lacan was one of the first who split the two concepts and deepened the gap between them.²⁰ By polarizing them, he, in a sense, was capable of getting closer to the understanding of the structure of psychoses and the functions of narcissism.

¹⁸ In the following comment of a student one can see what happens when neither of the available models of the ego-ideal (e.g., an *Americanized* Russia or the *original* Russia) is recognized as one's own, that is, when any of them is seen as empty and borrowed: "The new Russia is horribly Americanized; on its surface it looks almost similar to the European countries, but it remains wild underneath. Learning only from their own mistakes, people are trying to get used to this new life-styles. Though, here and there once in a while it is possible to see a reviving of Russian traditions; but for some reasons these traditions already look exotic." (f-18-jur)

¹⁹ In his later works Freud distinguished the notions by calling them Object-libido (i.e., ideal-ego) and ego-libido (i.e., ego-ideal). See, for example, Freud, S. (1966).

²⁰ About the history of these two concepts of the ego see in: Roudinesco, E. (1997) Jacques Lacan. New York: Columbia University Press, p.284.

There is a certain difficulty with Lacan's view for the role of the two egos in the process of the subject formation, though. Being preoccupied with the role of the Other and the Symbolic, Lacan is famous for his emphasis on the formative function of the mirror stage that manifests the subject transition from the Imaginary (in)to the Symbolic. The role of the ideal-ego, its function in psychoses and in primary narcissism remains pretty much unexplored in Lacan's works – usually it is relegated to the position of the “narcissistic captation”²¹ and left there alone. However, in the few cases when Lacan does deal with this notion, he comes unusually close to the ideas developed by Melanie Klein. For example, in his *Seminar VII* Lacan formulates the distinction between the two egos in the following way:

*Ichlibido and Objekt-libido are introduced by Freud in relation to the difference between Ich-ideal and Ideal-ich, between the mirage of the ego and the formation of an ideal. This ideal makes room for itself alone; within the subject it gives form to something which is preferred and to which it will henceforth submit. The problem of identification is linked to this psychological splitting, which places the subject in the state of dependency relative to an idealized, forced image of itself.*²²

The point, certainly, is to spell out what Lacan, with his dislike of object relations theory in general and Melanie Klein in particular, does not say directly. That is, this “*Ideal-ich*,” this “*Object-libido*,” this “ideal” does not make room for itself “*alone*.” The “*something* which is preferred” by it and to which it “gives form” is none other than the object of the

²¹ Lacan J. (1991) “The ego-ideal and ideal-ego.” In: Lacan, J. *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique. 1953-54*. London: W.W. Norton & Company, p.142.

²² Lacan, J. (1992) “Drives and lures.” In Lacan, J. *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan. Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. 1959-1960*. London: W.W. Norton & Company, p.98.

primary identification, that is, the mother to be split from in the form of *Ich-ideal*. And it is precisely with respect "to this internalized object" in the form of the ideal-ego "that in auto-erotic gratification and narcissistic states a withdrawal takes place."²³ To put it differently, the ideal-ego functions in a sense as the umbilical cord that could lead to the place where the navel of the ego-ideal would emerge, and so therefore to the place where the primary separation took place.

Within the frame of the distinction between the primary narcissism (of the ideal-ego) and the secondary narcissism (of the ego-ideal), then, it is easier to understand the students' phantasies about the new Russian man's lack of symbolic means. For the(ir) regression here reaches its lowest level – the level of the students' primary attachment to the symbolic means of the Soviet epoch during which their own vocabulary of desire has been formed. Their inability to project the (Soviet) ideal-ego onto different (post-Soviet) objects, and thus to "defrost" their Imaginary by creating a new ego-ideal finds its outlet in the figure of the new Russian man whose omnipotence they could express only by adding more zeros to the limited set of his objects-digits. Describing the new Russia a female student clearly betrays being caught within the rhetorical limits of the old language of desire:

- *The new Russia? Well, on the one hand, it is like a wild animal that just has been released from a cage. As a bear that has been kept in a cage three-steps wide and three-steps long. Thus, all that this bear can do is to move three steps forward or three steps back – for it has been captured in this cage for too long. And now, when the bear is released, it still continues to do the same old thing – three steps forward and/or three steps back. The same thing is*

²³ Klein, M. (1975) "The origin of transference." p. 51.

happening to some people ... they are afraid of something, they live as they have been living for ages – without changing anything, without trying out new possibilities to earn money. They even wear the same old and torn apart clothes. Yet, they may be keeping in their souls the cultural traditions; they are more intelligent, more spiritually advanced.

On the other hand, the new Russia is again like an animal ... like a wolf or a dog that got off the leash, that got to be 'free at last.' This dog would eat up anything it sees, regardless whether it likes or not, whether it is hungry or not. It wants everything – new clothes, cars, food, new furniture. And the material always goes first, while the spiritual, intelligent, cultural is forgotten. However these are two extremes. Of course, there are imperfections in any society. But there is the "third" way, the golden mean, too. It has been, and it always will be. (f-20-fil)

While clearly understanding the necessity to take up the "third" path, the students do not go any further than that. The nature or the direction of this path somehow escapes their descriptions, or, as a student frames it – this situation of the golden mean remains for them to be "unreachable for the moment" (f-18-tech). As in the new Russian woman's case, the signifying gap is acknowledged here rather than displaced; the lack is understood but not (re)covered. To frame the same idea differently, the phantasies about the new Russian man reproduce a structure typical for the paranoid-schizoid position, where the ego is only being formed and the ideal-ego is only approaching the stage from which to look at its reflection in the Lacanian mirror. I shall return to this point later.

Now, the distinction between the primary and the secondary narcissisms as a distinction between the different levels of the ego's development (or ego's regression) can clarify Kristeva's concept of primary narcissism and its constitutive function, which are quite different from the formative function of the mirror stage. If the latter is grounded on

misrecognition, on accepting the reversed and unified reflection as the image of one's body, then the former is seen as being a protection of the "*not-yet-an-Ego*"²⁴ arising out of the process of the primal separation. It is precisely during this process of transformation of the symbiotically existing dyad (motherchild) into two separate/separated entities (mother/child) that narcissism reveals "itself as a screen over [the] *emptiness*" of the emerging ego of the child.²⁵ And it is through the gradual mechanism of projection, through increasing *imaginary extension* of one's body onto other objects, through a subsequent process of alienation of these *extended* "body parts," that the child comes to terms with the world. What happens when this extension is drastically blocked or interrupted or when the symbolic equations of body parts with external objects are limited? In this case, the subject is forced to retreat to the safety net of narcissism, that is, to hide behind the screen protecting the still-empty ego. As Kristeva points out,

If narcissism is a defense against the emptiness of separation, then the whole contrivance of imagery, representations, identifications, and projections that accompany it on the way toward strengthening the Ego and the Subject is a means of exorcising that emptiness.²⁶

In other words, the shining shield of the crimson suit is meant to be a form of protection of the symbolically void ego, which is unable to find a re-fill for the abolished signifiers of the Soviet epoch.

²⁴ Kristeva (1987) p.49.

²⁵ Ibid., p.23.

²⁶ Ibid., p.42.

ACTING PROFESSIONAL(LY)

That the narcissistic shield is nothing but a mask, a disguise able to protect but unable to fulfill does not escape the students' perception. Some of them define these "protective" measures as an inadequate 'imitation':

- *The new Russia is nothing but imitation. In a rush people try to grab as much as they can. Everyone thinks about him or herself only. Trying to catch up with Europe, the Russian person is losing his/her "own self." We look almost like them! We dress like them, or at least, we try to do so. We eat and drink the same stuff (though, this is a debatable question when it comes to quality). We watch their movies, not ours. I am ashamed of the new Russia. (f 18 fil).*

In the last section of this chapter I will show how the new Russian media are trying to "domesticate" these alien(ating) and foreign objects of desire, to accommodate them into the already existing language. Now I just want to draw our attention to the equation the student is making, that is, between *losing* (i.e., projecting) one's self and *consuming* (i.e., introjecting) foreign objects. The student's xenophobia is not the point in question. The important things to notice are, first, her *object*-ification of the self and, second, her inability to find *appropriate* objects to see her reflections in. This absence of reflection, of an external confirmation of one's existence inevitably leads to the feeling of shame, that is, to the recognition of a gap between the (socially) expected standards of behavior and the (person's) actual behavior. And once again, similar to the rhetoric device used to displaced one's fear of coming capitalism onto the body of the woman from the Piccadilly Circus,

losing one's personal boundaries is equated here with losing the boundaries of the country: the lost self thus easily becomes the stolen self.

Moreover, as the quote makes clear, imitating the self might well be protective but it does not substitute the lost parts of the self; for, in order to be effective, the ego-ideal must replace or, at least, coincide with the ideal-ego. And until this happens the ideal-ego would be experienced as a void, or as a wound, caused by the historical trauma. Or, to use Kaja Silverman's concepts, in a situation when the characters of the "dominant fiction" disappeared, having left behind an empty stage, the spectator has nothing else to do but to enjoy him or her self, thus becoming an actor and the spectator simultaneously – with no script to articulate but with props and curtains to periodically hide oneself behind.

Interestingly enough, even when the actors do appear on the stage, the students keep hiding their empty egos under the screen of narcissism, being unable or unwilling to unchain their signifying abilities. The role-models (i.e., potential ego-ideals) made available by popular culture are taken into consideration as long as and so far as they match the "emptiness" of the students' ego. In what follows, I want to show how students avoided a feeling of losing their own "selves" into the foreign Others by using a very unusual form of projective or, rather, *operational* identification.

In April 1996 I asked several groups of Siberian students²⁷ to write down their opinions about a new James Bond film just released in Russia.²⁸ Back then one of the most influential Moscow newspapers citing the line from the advertisement poster for this movie

²⁷ 36 persons at all; almost all of these students took part in my field research one year later, in April 1997.

²⁸ A part of the interviews collected during this project was used in the article I published with L. Blednova in 1997. See: Oushakine S., Blednova L. (1997) "James Bond kak Pavka Korchagin" *Sociologicheskie Issledovania*, 12. The line of arguments I am using here is absolutely different from the one used in the article.

– “*GoldenEye*: No Limits! No Fear! No Equal!” – was quick to add: “There is nothing new, either.”²⁹ And, as it turned out, the newspaper was right. The students whom I asked about the film read it as a confirmation and continuation of their own problems and fears.

Puzzled by a combination of the effect produced by the arrival of this cultural phenomenon in Russia with the chaos created by the rapidly dismantled cultural, political, social and economic hierarchies of the Soviet period, I was interested in knowing the students’ reaction. My main questions were: “In what form – if any – does identification of the students with the characters in the film happen?” “What functions here as a trigger that releases the flow of the students’ phantasies and allows them to project their own emotions and motivations onto the screen?” The finding was as surprising as it was predictable. In the situation of cultural havoc and moral ambiguity, it was an already familiar figure of the “subject who knows” that attracted the most attention of the students. There was a slight difference though. Unlike the new Russian man who knows “how to earn money,” the characters in the movie know “how to be effective regardless of the circumstances.” The “subject who knows,” thus, was equated by the students with the notions of “*competency*” and “*professionalism*.”

To contextualize the situation more fully, I must admit that the students left no doubt about their mode of spectatorship. The majority of them indicated absolutely clearly that the movie is a “strange and unpleasant parody, that makes fun of Russian ‘dummies,’” (f-18-ir), that the whole plot is “comically unreal” (f-17-ir), that the characters are “grotesque.” And yet, this “*conditional*” – make oneself believe it – reading of the film

²⁹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 1996, February, 07.

did not prevent the students from singling out the necessary points of identification. As one of them stated:

- *Having watched this movie, I came to the conclusion that the film does not correspond to reality whatsoever; but some of the characters are quite real.* (f-18-ir)

What are the indicators of the *realness* of these “grotesque” characters? Regardless of their age and gender the students were unanimous on one issue. As one of them put it: “All the characters in the film are... professionals, each of them is a specialist in his or her area” (f-19-ir). Even though the romantic subplot of the *GoldenEye* was one of the most intense ones, it remained almost unnoticed – or at least unreflected about – by the students. Instead, as a male student formulated it,

- *It was the characters' business-mindedness, their strong principles, their attitude to their job, their desire to accomplish the defined task and to attain the goal by any means that was the most attractive in the film.* (m-19-ir)

Explaining her sympathy for the female character – Xenia Onatop – who performed the typical (Russian) “bad-girl” role as Bond’s enemy, a female student indicated almost the same qualities:

- *The character's desire to reach the defined goal by all means produces a deep impression on the spectators. She is full of energy and never gives up in difficult situations. From the way she acts it is clear that she is an expert; and only those people who work hard, who are totally devoted to their work could become experts. I admire such people.* (f-20-ir)

What was interesting in the students' essays was their complete silence in regard to the content of the characters' activity. While praising the characters' goal-setting and goal-achieving ("such desire to accomplished the defined goal is an unalienable factor of any business person" m-18-ir) and their business-mindedness ("James Bond is the ideal of the person who does his or her job" f-17-ir), the students left untouched the question of the content of the characters' motivations. The following comments are among the most typical:

- *All the characters in this film are good; even though they all are good in a specific way. I mean the firmness and strength of their convictions that they did not cease to defend during the movie (f-18-ir).*
- *I have sympathy and respect for all the main characters of the movie. If one is supposed to judge people not by their deeds but by their personality, then these characters are positive. They are people with strong will... As to judging by their deeds, then any one can easily paint them with any color – white, black, or bloody... (f-20-ir).*

One of the students states the same point in a more personal form:

- *As far as I am concerned, I do not have any moral principles, or motto, for it would have contradicted with the very principle of multi-factor decision-making. I think that motto is applicable only for a very specific situation, not for life in general (m-19-ir).*

It seems to me that all these comments about characters' purposefulness, determination, and decisiveness, coupled with the students' complete obliviousness to the content of the characters' actions demonstrate the same narcissistic structure at work. Just as in the case of the new Russian man, the characters are used here to create a shell that

would protect the same “empty” ego. The symbolic poverty of the students’ descriptions, their attempt to see any act only from the point of view of its result, evokes the same interpretative strategy that has been also used by this and other groups of students to describe the new Russian man. The alleged megalomania of the new Russians is substituted here with the aggressive confidence of the characters in their right to achieve their goals, leaving unanswered the same questions: what are the issues that the *GoldenEye* heroes and heroines are so certain about? What are they fighting for (or against)? And where is this world with the new Russian man as its navel? Unable to retrieve their symbolic potential, that is, unable to make a move from the undifferentiated ideal-ego to the alienated ego-ideal, the students are left to circulate within the same limits of the primary narcissistic structure, where wealth is measured by its quantity and where film characters are attractive as long as they are effective. In other words, the type of identification activated here is not empathetic but instrumental and what matters in this kind of identification is not what character is or is not, but what he or she *does* in order to make his or her idiosyncratic qualities non-transparent, to become a universally acceptable professional. One of the students describes it this way:

- *the main characters of the film are marked by the same quality – their determination to reach a goal by all available means. They are totally indifferent to life, death does not scare them either. For myself I learned from this movie that one should be more perseverant and not be afraid of sacrificing something unimportant in order to fulfill the dream of his or her life. But sometimes one should take into consideration the people surrounding him or her. (m-18-ir)*

To preliminary summarize the main points: as I have tried to show, the image of the new Russian man was used by the students predominantly in order to create a site for their own narcissistic identification. The students' restricted symbolic vocabulary, their reluctance to move beyond the limited set of status-objects already familiar from the previous Soviet epoch, as I argued, indicates a certain problem with and anxiety in regard to the newly emerging languages and symbols that could describe on-going changes. The empty stability of the new Russian man's wealth or the abstract effectiveness of the "professionals" from the *GoldenEye* depicted by the students, in that respect, function as a psychological anchor helping to prevent the changing or fragmented ego from its complete collapse. In the rest of this chapter I want to show with help of new men's glossy magazines how a new phantasmatic language can/might be learned, that is, how the new Russian man can finally enter the realm of the Symbolic.

A BEAR-ABLE MIRROR

In the *New Maladies of the Soul* Julia Kristeva describes the case of her patient, Dideir. Being a painter who dealt with images professionally, he was, nevertheless, unable to tell a story, as he was lacking symbolic means to explain his desire and passion. Kristeva calls this "enclosed, self-directed, and contained totality"³⁰ – her patient with a "narcissistic personality"³¹ – a "symbolic emblem of contemporary man – an actor or consumer of the society of the spectacle who has run out of imagination."³² As she

³⁰ Kristeva (1995) p.15.

³¹ Ibid., p.12.

³² Ibid., p.10.

suggests, the purpose of the psychoanalytic treatment in cases like this consists in forcing the patient to learn the “language of phantasmatic narrative”³³ offered by the analyst – in other words, in providing the patient with a new repertoire of images of his or her self, with a new script for the dominant fiction. To frame the same idea in terms of the ego’s structure, the way to repair the signifying hole of Narcissus is to force him to make a move from a stage of captation by his ideal-ego to the stage of identification with his ego-ideal, with an alien image that brings together broken pieces of the ego. In the remaining part of this chapter I will show how exactly the new Russian man goes through this process of finding/making his own image, i.e., through the process of learning a new language of “phantasmatic narrative” to speak his self into. By analyzing a year’s (1996) collection of the Russian “*Bear: The Real Men’s Magazine*” I will show how a newly emerging leisure industry in Russia helps the new Russian man (or the-new-Russian-man-to-be) to gain mastery over a new language with which to frame his phantasies. While analyzing the magazine, I will also try to understand to what extent its images correlate to the students’ descriptions of the new Russian man.

In the end of 1995 and beginning of the 1996 several glossy magazines for men suddenly but simultaneously appeared on Russian newsstands. Two of them have managed to survive until now and seemingly fulfill quite important cultural demands. One of these magazines was a Russian version of *Playboy*, the other one was an original Russian publication project with a somewhat clichéd name – *Bear (Medved)*. Unlike *Playboy*, “*Bear: The Real Men’s Magazine*” chooses to define its reader not in terms of his (hetero)sexual desire, but rather in terms of his *status* aspirations, that is, in terms of his

³³ Ibid., p.10.

aspirations for status—signifying *objects*. This change of strategy in defining (or building) the reading audience is quite significant and certainly demonstrates two different economies of desire. For the *Bear's* attention to things can not be seen just as a newer version of fetishism, that is, a displacement of the desire for the woman onto substituting objects. Instead of that, as I will show, the desire commercially produced by the *Bear* is reduced to the attempts of enlarging, increasing, extending one's own (male) body.³⁴ Why and how does it happen?

In his "Subversion of the subject and dialectic of desire" Jacques Lacan indicates that desire always functions as mediated, as alienating and alienated – that is, it always presupposes the existence of someone – or something – to whom the desire is addressed. Lacan writes:

man's desire is the *desir de l' Autre* (the desire of the Other) in which the *de* provides what grammarians call the "subjective determination," namely, that it is *qua* Other that he desires....

That is why the question *of* the Other, which comes back to the subject from the place from which he expects an oracular reply in some such form as '*Che vuoi?*', '*What do you want?*', is the one that best leads him to the path of his own desire.³⁵

³⁴ It must be mentioned here, that this phenomenon of commercially produced male's desires is not something exclusively new Russian or post-Soviet; a similar process in the West has been a subject of many studies (Among many, see for example: Barthel, D. (1994) "A gentleman and a consumer." In: Maasick, S., Solomon, J. (eds.) *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings in Popular Culture for Writers*. Boston: Bedford Books; Chapman, R. (1988) "The great pretender: Variations on the New man theme." In; Chapman, R., Rutherford, J. *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.). However, there is a significant difference between the two types of consumption. The Western studies of the New man's consumption habits are primarily focused on the ways the traditionally "feminine" leisure activity is getting transformed into a legitimate "male" business. My research has a different starting point – there was *no* shopping-as-leisure (regardless of its gender dimension) during the Soviet time; as a result, the dynamic of commercially produced desires has different trajectory here.

³⁵ Lacan, J. (1977) "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious." In J. Lacan. *Ecrits: A Selection* (Trans. by A. Sheridan). New York: London: W. W. Norton & Company, p.312.

It is, certainly, the psychoanalyst whom Lacan, as well as Kristeva, had in mind when speaking about the “place” from which the subject expects an “oracular reply” offering a structure of the phantasmatic narrative. *Bear* assumes the similar position of oracle with regard to the new Russian man. Though, the magazine does this with some adjustment – Lacan’s *desir de l’Autre* – the desire of the Other – has been turned here into the desire of the other man’s goods. The somewhat lengthy quote from *Bear* that follows below shows how it happens:

- *Just imagine him – the famous guy who is known (and sometimes even loved) by everyone in our big country. Even when he is not stunning, he is always damn charming. Because it is his job – to be charming... Just imagine him – in his 25–30–35–40 years he is the CEO of a big company, or even – dare I say this word? – of a holding.³⁶ He is used to making important decisions and taking responsibility. True, not always is he well dressed but almost always he is dressed very expensively. Quite often he is able to speak an unfamiliar foreign language. And more often than not he prefers expensive cigars to the cheap ones, expensive brandies – to vodka, “Hugo Boss” – to “Shipr,”³⁷ Grand Cherokee – to Lada, and Paris and Dakar – to the vacations on the shore of the Rybinsk water reservoir.³⁸ The most amazing thing about all this stuff is that he not just prefers all that, but he could also afford all that. And let me conclude without a second thought: this is wonderful, for the almost extinct breed of real men has not disappeared from the face of the earth. Moreover, some specimens of this breed you could observe even pretty closely, and – in case you are lucky enough – you could even touch them some time.³⁹*

³⁶ English in original.

³⁷ “Shipr” is a name of a relatively expensive male perfume with a strong smell that was universally used in the Soviet hair-salons.

³⁸ The Ribinsk water reservoir is an obscure place not too far away from Moscow.

³⁹ Medved, 1996, N 8, p.97.

Despite of all its irony and sarcasm, the quote nevertheless contains almost all the components with which the image of the new (*real!*) Russian man is being constructed in the mass media. The components are not numerous: *age*, *power*, and – most importantly – the *life style*, that is a certain set of goods, forms and patterns of consumption. What is characteristic about these elements, though, is their emptiness. Taken on their own, they would not say much about the real man. Only when related to each other, only when representing something that has not been said, something outside the immediate frame of reference do these components become significant. The real man's juvenility can be fully grasped only by those for whom the gerontocrats from the *Politburo* are still a part of the picture. The importance of Paris and Dakar could only be understood by someone who has gone to the Rybinsk water reservoir for too long. Being used to "making decisions," and "taking responsibility" is essential only in the light of a man's concern that he could (again) be deprived of his share of power. What is left outside of the brackets of this rhetorical frame is the element that would explain *what* exactly to do in Paris and *what* kinds of decisions to make. In other words, discussion about the essence of the *real* man is replaced here by a discussion about the types of the man's accessories. The title of the magazine is telling in this respect, too: the metaphor of bear is probably called upon to represent at least two traditional qualities of the *real* man. This man's independence, autonomy, and aloofness; to use yet another zoological metaphor – the lonely masculinity of the "steppe wolf," on the one hand. And the aggression, the "natural" lack of restraint, and potentially explosive instincts typical for the *real* man, on the other. However, both components have gone through a civilizing treatment by the *Bear*. As a result, the *real* man's *independence* has taken the shape of independent expertise and independent

professional judgement, while the man's *aggressivity* gets sublimated into "heroic" mastery of the consumption process.

The two sections of the *Bear* – "*The things that suit*" (*Veshi vporu*) and "*The tail-coat*" (*Frak*) represent an attempt to conceptualize the *real* man as the *man-who-knows* or the *man-in-the-right-place*. Seemingly, the main message of these sections implies not so much the idea of the necessity to *construct* one's own world of things that would fit, as one's ability to *find* the appropriate things (or a place) among those already existing. Thus, the emphasis here falls onto learning how to make use, so to speak, of *pret-à-porter*, or, to recall Lacan's metaphor, – how to fit one's pegs of the signifieds into the available holes of the signifiers. It is in this process of adjusting one's self to the available tail-coats that the *real* man becomes a *self-made* man. Presenting photos of this type of man in the section "*The things that suit*," the magazine, for example, does not indicate any information except for the men's professional status. For within the concept of the *self-made-man* it is not the "*man*" who is important, nor is it even his being "*made*," but rather, the prefix "*self*" that denies all previous and current dependencies. The idea of professional competency thus functions as the ontological rack onto which to put any form of identity; and the real man's identity included too. An Olympic champion in weight-lifting explains to *Bear* his view on the process of finding, or rather *making*, his *self* out of *nobody*:

- *when you just start your first training sessions – you are nobody, and you have to work hard in order to prove to yourself and to the rest of the world that you are somebody. It is only now I am on the very top, I am a champion. And who was I before that? Just nobody, just a fellow who lifts weights.*⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Medved, 1996, N 14, p.85.

Making one's self is certainly only a starting point in the long process of creating a self-sufficient burrow with an expert-bear inside it. Under the rubric "The Winners," *Bear* describes the following role, or rather ego-ideal, model:

- *The creative phantasy of [the Italian designer] Gianfranco Ferre is spurred up by many features of his character. He is very jealous. He can be jealous of anything: he must feel that a friend is his friend, that a couch is his couch, a dress is his dress, and a shirt is his shirt. And if clothes are to become his, they should be his totally – from the fabric to the last seam. It also means that the fabric should be designed by him, should become a part of his own world... He does not know how to relax. Fashion is his passion, and his work is his life's meaning.*⁴¹

There are two moments in these quotations that bring them close to the students' phantasies about the new Russian man, and thereby reveal the narcissistic structure at work. The first one deals with the self-enclosed nature of the *real* or the new Russian man – he and he himself alone is responsible for his success; his achievements are just an extension of his inner world, a projection of his ego, as Melanie Klein would have said. The other moment concerns the visibility of signs of his success: however potentially "rich/wealthy" and/or "creative" the inner self of the real man is, it needs to be publicly acknowledged. Speaking about "style," a TV producer reflects these two moments in his interview to *Bear*: "Style," he explains, "is when you do not peep into anywhere but inside yourself, and then try to do something out of this."⁴² The question is, who is to look at the stylistic exercises of this creator who is auto-erotically peeping into himself? As in

⁴¹ Ibid., p.96.

⁴² Ibid., p.41.

the case of the new Russian man, the concept of narcissism, I believe, is instrumental here. However, unlike earlier, it is not the *primary* narcissism on which the identification of the real man is built. Rather, we are dealing here with the narcissism of the mirror stage, the *secondary* narcissism, where the image and an outside gaze are the most important tools.

In the paper *On Narcissism*, Freud indicates four options the liberated libido of the narcissistic person has. A person may identify himself with

- (a) what he himself is (i.e., himself),
- (b) what he himself was,
- (c) what he himself would like to be,
- (d) someone who was once part of himself.⁴³

Bear employs all four options, trying to reach out to the biggest audience possible. Clearly crossing all class boundaries, the pictures of those whom "*the things suit*" well⁴⁴ probably give the new real man a chance to recall his recent past (option b). At the same time, the interviews with experts in "*tail-coats*" and essays published under the rubric "*A man's job*" help to support the real man's current vision of his own self (option a). To provoke a search for a new image (or a tail-coat?) the magazine allocates a lot of space for publishing pictures of ostensibly "exclusive" male models (option c). And finally, in the historical section of the magazine titled "*The old Russians*," *Bear* might be trying to bring back to life the objects and subjects that could become a *new* point of primary identification for the new Russians (option d). In other words, by offering these options of identification to the reader, *Bear* apparently tries to create its own context; however, it is

⁴³ Freud, S. (1995) p.556.

⁴⁴ Under this rubric the magazine published photos of such professionals as sculptors, meat-cutters, boxers, TV-producers, etc.

important that this anticipated context does provide the post-Soviet reader with the possibility to overcome the symbolic spasm created by the rapid changes in the country and to move into the direction of one's own making.

It is no accident that in order to force the reader to make this move from being captated by his ideal-ego to introjecting the offered models of the ego-ideal, *Bear* decides to activate the visual aspect of narcissistic identification. In his paper on narcissism, Freud himself already equates this transition with appearance of "delusions of being noticed" or "being watched" by a "special psychic agency."⁴⁵ Lacan's concept of the mirror stage further clarifies this agency.

In "*The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience*," while describing a child responding with a series of gestures to his reflection in the mirror, Lacan points out that the child

experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and between this virtual complex and the reality it reduplicates – the child's own body, and the persons and things around him.⁴⁶

Lacan is talking here about two spatial realms where the child's identification takes place. They are: (a) a field of the Imaginary created on the mirror's surface by the relations between the moving reflection of the body and the reflected objects; and (b) a field of the Symbolic composed by the relations between the realm of the reflections captured by the mirror and the realm of the objects juxtaposed to this reflecting surface.

⁴⁵ Freud, S. (1995) p.559.

⁴⁶ Lacan, J. (1977) "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience." In J. Lacan. *Ecrits. A Selection*. Trans. by Sheridan, A. London and New York: W. W Norton & Company, p.1.

In a sense, these two fields, or two stages, describe the child's evolution in its relations with reality – there is an imaginary picture of the world (the reflection in the mirror) that is followed by an attempt to correlate it with the source(s) of its origin, i.e., the real objects. It is important that the imaginary object comes first. For as Lacan put it,

the real objects, which pass via the mirror and through it, are in the same place as the imaginary object. The essence of the image is to be invested by the libido. What we call libidinal investment is what makes an object more desirable, that is to say how it becomes confused with this more or less structured image which, in diverse ways, we carry with us.⁴⁷

Then, what kind of imaginary object is that? The object of one's body. It is the coherent and unified image that "gives the subject an imaginary mastery over his body, one which is premature in relation to a real mastery."⁴⁸ In other words, it is in this image of his body, in this "mirage of himself" that the human being sees his form materialized, whole... outside himself."⁴⁹ Thus, only by incorporating this ideal-looking self (ego-ideal), by imposing on himself the "salutary *imago*"⁵⁰ of the self, can the subject frame his emerging identity. While being rooted in the imaginary, the subject nevertheless must bring together his images of the world and of himself with the world itself, that is, assume a position "on the level of the symbolic plane"⁵¹ (i.e., within the field *b*), on the level of the symbolic exchanges with the other. And, as Lacan suggests, the "guide" that governs the subject in the process of this homological construction is his ego-ideal.⁵²

⁴⁷ Lacan (1991) "The ego-ideal and ideal-ego," p.140.

⁴⁸ Lacan (1991) "The topic of the imaginary," p.79.

⁴⁹ Lacan (1991) "The ego-ideal and ideal-ego," p.140.

⁵⁰ Lacan, J. (1977) "Aggressivity in psychoanalysis." In J. Lacan. *Ecrits. A Selection*. A. Sheridan (trans.). London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, p. 18.

⁵¹ Lacan (1991) "The ego-ideal and ideal-ego," p.140.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.140.

Lacan's theoretical explorations seem to be perfectly in line with the strategy assumed by *Bear*: the image of the professional self-made man is to function as an anticipated stage of the readers' development, as an imaginary screen to cover bits and pieces of their ego(s). There is a certain problem with the image of the expert acting as an identificatory model, though – and the students' comments about *GoldenEye* revealed it clearly. Being attractive as an idea, the concept of professionalism and competency is pretty non-inspiring as an image due to its instrumental rather than substantial nature. To avoid this impasse, *Bear* complements the idea of the *real* man as the *man-as-an-expert* with the image of the *man-as-a-connoisseur*. The idea of competency thus is displaced, or rather extended, to the realm of consumption, providing the real man with an outlet for his aggressive impulses. By framing consumption in rhetorically aggressive forms, *Bear* could avoid yet another obstacle – namely, the traditional equation of consumption with female type of behavior. To the idea of *enjoyment* of/by the objects, *Bear* juxtaposes the idea of *conquering* or *mastering* the objects. For example, *Bear* describes such a seemingly ordinary part of the home audio system as an amplifier in the following way;

Two amplifiers and a pre-amplifier from the F-series are beautiful to look at and to listen to. With their profound corners, heavy iron torsos and gothic curls, the creatures of Anthony Michaelson [the constructor of the amplifiers] to a certain extent bring back the memory of a cavalcade of the ancient knights in their black armor. The similarity is even stronger due to the ancient looking bulbs used in the amplifiers' outlets. There is only one thing the "knights" were not lucky with – their names – F15, F18, F22... For every normal person understands it immediately – these are no amplifiers, these are fighter-planes.⁵³

⁵³ Medved, N 8, p.121.

The same metaphor of the “knight’s armor” is used to describe computer notebooks, too. Trying to avoid any unwelcome associations, *Bear* describes the portable computer as an “electronic arm-carrier” that serves the wandering “warriors” of the modern times, “namely, businessmen, writers, and journalists.”⁵⁴ It is absolutely logical then, that within this rhetorical construction it is not the type-writer that is understood as the notebook’s closest ancestor but the “President’s black suit-case” that gives access to nuclear weapons.⁵⁵

Here is yet another example of the same rhetorical war being waged by the wandering warriors. Describing a certain brand of audio-speakers, *Bear* outlines the symbolic frame clearly: “A soldier and a music-lover have no interests in common. Instead, they have a common enemy – silence.”⁵⁶ It is hardly surprising then, that the listening to music becomes a way of *fighting* with silence. Or, in *Bear*’s words:

Surely enough, to fight silence ordinary music only is not enough. And nothing else would better destroy the sleeping silence of the block than a series of gunshots and explosions of the medium-range missiles. And let your neighbors smash their heads over their apartment walls in vain begging you to tame your dinosaur; the home theater has no trust in any one’s tears. Especially when this theater is armed with the audio-system from Kef. ⁵⁷

Why does *Bear* need this imaginarily militarized environment? What is the purpose of its rhetorical transformation into a fortress, with amplifiers as fighters, audio-speakers as gun-machines, and the one-button notebook as its headquarters? To a certain degree the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.126.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.127.

situation is clear. As Kristeva reminds us, the narcissistic person is not the same as autistic person: "he discovers objects but they are objects of hatred."⁵⁸ Or, in a slightly modified form, they are the objects to express one's hatred with. There is an additional explanation to this, though. Being unable to fill up the empty (professional) ego of the *real* man, *Bear* does the same thing as the students in their phantasies about the new Russian man: the magazine objectifies and inflates the screen covering the emptiness. However, instead of multiplying familiar objects of the Soviet epoch, *Bear* introduces a new approach to learning the labels, i.e., becoming readable for the others, too. The crimson suit here is to be replaced with fancier clothes. And *Bear* offers a suitable choice for this transformation:

*The heroic aureole surrounding the fictitious character with a name Charles Cheignon happens to be indispensable in the boring daily life of today. Its 'coolness' – not in a somewhat crude and standardized American way, but in its French, that is, mild, refined, and elegant version, so typical for this country – helps to improve your mood, gives you the wings to fly, forces you to raise your chin proudly, feeling in each cell of your body a close connection with the romanticism of the war times.*⁵⁹

Certainly, it is difficult not to admit *Bear*'s success in proliferating the signifiers of the *real* Russian man after the fall of Communism. The assortment of the *Bear*'s images and objects, though, should not obscure a more fundamental fact – the magazine exploits the same, albeit more advanced, narcissistic structure of relation to the world as the students did. The structure whereby "instead of having to *create* what will enable him to equal his ideal – a work or an idealized object of love – Narcissus will *fabricate* an

⁵⁸ Kristeva (1987), p.35.

⁵⁹ Medved, N 15, p.114.

ersatz,”⁶⁰ a “fleeting display of fictional meaning”⁶¹ to hide behind. The similarity of the structures probably indicates a possible direction of ego development, too. While certainly not the only model in post-Soviet Russia to aspire to, *Bear* and its *real* man, nevertheless, are meaningful in their efforts to lead the evolution of the consumption patterns as well as consumers themselves in the post-socialist country, in order, no doubt, to accomplish the transition from the stage of fragmented ego to the stage of fascination with one’s own image. Or, to put it differently, – from the man of the state socialism chained in gold to the man of new Russia, covering his self with the real clothes of the fictitious character.

To conclude, I want to briefly summarize the main points of my discussion in this chapter. First of all, there several reasons for my attempt to use the concept of narcissism as a main theoretical tool in explaining the students’ comments. One, and the most important, of them deals with the necessity to clarify the fact of the students’ symbolic inhibition so vividly reflected in their essays. Their inability to cross the boundaries of the Soviet language of desire, I argued, must have had a lot in common with the phenomenon of “frozen” imagination, which, in turn, manifest the subjects’ arrest at (or regression to) the stage of primary identification, or primary narcissism. The students’ symbolic aphasia in that respect might be interpreted as a form of protection from the instability of the dominant fiction of the time. This, brings us to yet another dimension of the narcissistic withdrawal. Flight to the familiar (narcissistic) symbolic structure could be caused by two types of reason – one’s *inability* to successfully locate oneself within the new frame of the Symbolic, as well as, one’s *refusal* to do so. As I tried to argue, however, in the students’

⁶⁰ Kristeva (1987), p.126.

⁶¹ Kristeva (1987), p.136.

case these two reasons supplement rather than oppose to each other. By distinguishing between the primary narcissism of the ideal-ego and the secondary narcissism of the ego-ideal, I showed how one's being captated by his or her own (imaginary) self is supplemented by one's refusal to identify with any (symbolic) thing that might perform a signifying function. From that prospective, the students' strong preference for instrumental, operational, formal identification, devoid of any essential (and thus time-specific) meaning, might be seen as an inevitable form of self-preservation in a situation of political, economic, and cultural transition. The refusal to utilize new symbolic structures, thus, may function precisely as a refusal to institutionalize one's self as a transitional subject, i.e., the one with fluid boundaries and migrating identity. In other words, what seems to be happening, for example, in the students' reading of *Goldeneye*, is not an attempt to find a role-model to imaginarily merge with. Rather, what is sought is a model of behavior, a mode of production that proves to be *effective* in unpredictable situations. Hence, the language into which the students keep inscribing themselves is a language of syntax, not a language of matter. Certainly it is no surprise that the commercial language of new consumerism offered by *Bear* reproduces the same "narcissistic structuration" of desire. For the various signifiers and metaphors of *self-made-man* provided by the magazine must be located within a structure with a self-satisfying and self-absorbed subject in its core.

Besides the fact of the students' phantasmatic inhibition, there was yet another reason for choosing different interpretations of narcissism as my main theoretical tool. Namely, the prominent position occupied by the new Russian Femme Fatale in the students' essays. In this respect, the purpose of the chapter was to see whether the mother/child duality had been replicated in the students' essays. As was demonstrated, this

duality had been realized in the figure of the abjected new Russian woman and in the figure of self-centered new Russian man. By using this phantasmatic couple, the students apparently perform a fundamental operation of splitting – with a site of institutionalized anxiety on one hand and, correspondingly, with an enhanced and inflated ego, on the other. Having taken the new Russian woman as an embodiment of post-Soviet changes, the students thus marked the new Russian man as the pole of (Soviet) stability.

And finally, a more general point dealing with level of applicability of psychoanalytic concepts and developmental theories to the field of textual analysis. I certainly have no proven tool to measure the degree of explanatory effectiveness of such concepts as narcissism or, for example, a mirror stage in my reading of the students' essays. My approach to psychoanalytic interpretative strategy and technique is mostly metaphorical and discourse-oriented. For the issue in question is not to establish the final diagnosis but rather, following the "ray of [the] hypothesis"⁶² cast by Freud, to see whether there is an illness.

⁶² Freud (1995), p.622.

SUMMARY

In April 1997, answering my questions about their attitude to new Russia and their role in the on-going changes, the students whom I met in Siberia described a somewhat pessimistic picture. A sixteen-year old male student wrote, for example:

- *To describe the new Russia? The question is complex, multi-layered, and difficult. I have a negative attitude to the processes going on in our country now. As far as the opening of the iron curtain is concerned, I am absolutely positive about that. There is a place for me in all these changes, but it is so small, that it makes no sense to talk about it. There is a place for me, and those who know it use it for their purposes. (m-16-sch)*

Another student was even less certain about his place: "My attitude to these changes is negative. And there is no place for me whatsoever." (m-15-sch). Even when pressed to define this place (or its absence), even when asked to fill-in the notion of "post-Soviet man" with their own meanings, the students tried to stay away from any specific details or commentaries, except of this kind:

- *Post-Soviet man is a man lost in the cruel world. He keeps trying to find his own self and, despite his constant failure, he does not lose his faith, because the faith is all that he has. He is absolutely naked – in a spiritual, material, or national sense. (f-19-tech).*

It was precisely the situation of historical trauma, of this unexpected and sudden loss of everything that could have provided a sense of even temporary "spiritual," "material," or, for example, "national" security, that I tried to understand and describe in

my thesis. By analyzing the students' narratives, I wanted to grasp the possible causes that resulted in a situation of profound *anomie* and *aphasia*.

My research had yet another dimension. By questioning the students' effort to flee from being located and being named, I hoped to involve them, metaphorically speaking, in a process of creating new mapping tools to define their own boundaries. It did not go easily. One of the students, after an hour-long discussion, told me with a note of anger that I had no right to ask the sort of questions I had asked. "For," as a nineteen-year old student put it, "they made me think about very serious things I did not want to think about" (m-19-ir). I took the anger, as well as the comment, as a confirmation that my research and activity had been moving in the right direction, for I think that without clearly established basic categories – with all their evanescence, flexibility, and/or instrumentality – one is doomed to perpetuate the situation of historical trauma forever. The student's anger in this respect could be seen as a form of resistance – certainly, not so much to my attempt to penetrate his conscious (or unconscious), but rather to his own recognition of the existing repression of this trauma.

In *The World of Words: Coming to Terms* I made an attempt to determine the structural principles whereby the students create their narratives about personal qualities ("gender" and "nationality") and about the place where these qualities are realized ("Motherland"). As I argued, in their essays the students vividly demonstrated a perplexing tendency. While displaying a clear knowledge of the socially "appropriate," dominant content of such *general* terms as "*man*," "*woman*," "*gender*," and "*nationality*," they, however, managed to keep their definitions of the "*Russian*" man, or the "*Soviet*" woman away from the normative meaning. In other words, it was not the logic of the "*dominant*" gender or national "*fiction*" that defined the students' approach to their *own* experience.

Rather, as I discovered, it was the logic of *structural* and *structuring* oppositions and binaries, inconsistency and supplementary negation that gave the form to personal stories and thus unified personal experience.

The second chapter – *The New Russian Woman: the Fatal Splitting* interpreted students' preference for structural rather than narrative elements in the process of creation of their stories with help of psychoanalytic theory. It was crucial for my research to identify in their narratives the *paranoid phantasmatic structure* that was produced by the anxiety associated with historical trauma and that manifested itself in such rhetorical devices as splitting and consolidation. By using students' descriptions of the new Russian woman I showed how the gaps and ruptures in the dominant fiction, created by the collapse of the Soviet symbolic system, were projected onto the figure of woman. In order to explain the psychoanalytic meaning of this object choice, I used the theories of Melanie Klein and Julia Kristeva. My theoretical choice was based on the fact that it was these two psychoanalysts who have explored extensively in their works the role of pre-Oedipal, primary, identification in the process of the ego development and the forms of regression to this stage during the periods of the subject's anxiety.

Using the concepts developed by Pierre Bourdieu, in the chapter "*The World of Things: Inflating Prices*" I wanted to correlate the patterns of *imaginary consumption* outlined in the students' narratives with possible *social conditions* of their existence. By exploring the rhetorical forms in which the students reproduce a conflict between the imaginarily acquired new Russian property and their (real) consumption habits rooted in the Soviet experience, I demonstrated the reasons for the students' particular attention to the structural – in this case, quantitative – aspects of new Russian consumption. As I argued, the new Russian man's consumption functions in the students' essays as a form of

“projective identification,” in the process of which they impose their own – mostly, working class – vision of the “taste of luxury” onto an unfamiliar to them consumer group.

The sociology of tastes was undoubtedly useful in understanding the fact that the students use the figure of the new Russian man to represent their *own* concepts. This theory, however, could not solve the dilemma of the students’ refusal to use what Julia Kristeva calls a *new* language of desire. I examine this problem within the frame of theory of narcissism in the chapter “*The New Russian Man: The Narcissistic Screening*.” From the point of view of this theory, I argued, the students’ “frozen” imagination can be seen as a manifestation of their regression to the stage of primary narcissism, where symbolic aphasia functions as a form of protection from the instability of socially acceptable signifying forms. Besides, as I indicated, this regression demonstrated yet another process at work, namely, the students’ inability to successfully proceed from the state of the ideal-ego formation (that is, of narcissism) to the state of the creation of an alienated ego-ideal (that is, of external role-model). As I suggested, one of the main reasons for this failure could be the students’ refusal to institutionalize themselves as transitional subjects in a situation where no stable social, political, or even cultural affiliations are possible.

Just as the students, I also have the same desire not to institutionalize the transitional stage of my research. Having written this thesis, I realized that I have more questions than I had before. And it is hardly surprising that the questions I have now are based on the answers I found during my writing. The *paranoid structure* of the students’ narratives – with the (negative?) pole of the new Russian Femme Fatale on one hand and the (positive?) pole of the new Russian Narcissus on the other – poses a whole series of questions about the role of the dominant fiction in the situation of historical trauma. That is, to put it crudely, an old Marxist dilemma about a correlation between the symbolic, or

ideological superstructure and the political, economic, cultural, etc. modes of production. The transitional nature of post-Soviet Russia adds new dimensions to the classical paradigm – seemingly, there is no grand narrative, or dominant fiction, to be used as a master plan. And this situation, in turn, creates another line of theoretical, as well as very practical paradoxes. For example, what are the political (or social) ramifications of the person's inability to symbolically frame the changes going on in society and the person's place within it? What are the personal implications of the societal symbolic exasperation, i.e., how does one recognize his or her own social identity without going through a "collective mirror stage"? And then, in a situation of *becoming*, whose/what discourse performs the hegemonic function? Or, in the absence of the *State Apparatuses*, how does ideology realize itself? The major theoretical question I have now, thus, is: How could the new symbolic structures, adequately reflecting the society's *transition* from one social system to another, be brought to life without an annihilation of the previous symbolic forms on one hand and without cultural imperialism on the other? The purpose of this thesis was more to realize the practical importance of such a question than to find a clear-cut answer to it. In other words, instead of creating a dominant fiction, I tried to diagnose the trauma.

QUESTIONNAIRES

Depending on the group, the form of the questions was modified; however its content remained the same. Basically I used two main questionnaires one for the secondary school, and the other one for the rest of the student pool.

QUESTIONNAIRE #1

These questions were used in the high school only.

1. "Motherland." What kinds of association does this word evoke in you (what images, notions, comparisons)?
2. Soviet Union, Soviet Russia – what kind of memory do you have about these words (events? people? processes?)
3. New Russia – a dream or a reality? What is your attitude to and your place in the current changes?

How would you describe the following notions/people:

1. Real man and real woman.
2. Soviet man and Soviet woman.
3. New Russian man and new Russian woman.

QUESTIONNAIRE #2

The format of the questions for the rest of the students were slightly different:

1. What does "nationality" mean?
2. What does "Russian nationality" mean?
3. Describe the notion "Motherland".
4. Describe such notions as "Soviet Motherland"; "Soviet Union".
5. New Russia – please describe.

1. What does "gender" mean?
2. Please list 10-15 qualities of typical man/woman.
3. Please describe typical Soviet man/woman.
4. Please describe new Russian man/woman.
5. Can you describe people who do not fit any of these categories?

When describing the qualities, please keep in mind a certain person who could represent these qualities.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT ESSAYS

(full length)

QUESTIONNAIRE # 1

M-17-Sch

1. Motherland. This is forests, fields, rivers, my home. The images of Gorbachev and Lenin appear.
2. Soviet Union – it is about perestroika and Gorbachev. I recall a bread-roll that cost 3 kopeeks and my care-free childhood.
3. Soviet Russia – it is beginning of the war [in Chechnia], rising prices, Yeltsin in power.
4. New Russia – new Russians and increasing crime; it is about rush after money and fame. It is about a useless desire for a better life. “New Russia” does not change me for the better.
1. True man – a noble, giving-in, punctual, and hard-working person earning his living.
2. True woman – a beautiful, clever, kind woman who loves children and with whom one can talk without rush.
3. Soviet man – same as the “true man” but involved into politics. Soviet woman – same as the “true woman” but a little bit haughty.
4. New Russian – rich and stupid, who fulfills all his whims; generous, usually has his own company that brings good revenue.
5. New Russian woman – the New Russian’s wife. She does not work, delivering pleasure to her husband. She does not do anything at home – she has servants to take care of that. She plays golf and swims in the pool next to her house.

QUESTIONNAIRE #2

M-22-avto (a German)

1. Nationality – it is a type of people that are united by certain common features and customs, typical only for this group. Quite an important role in this process is played by national roots, traditions, culture that have been created and developed by this group of people.
2. Russian – this is a smart person, but at the same time – a very lazy one; he does something only if he is forced to do it. I think Russian man will be destroyed by vodka. If nothing changes, this smart, very smart man will fall into abyss; he will get out of this abyss, but it will take him a long-long time.
3. Motherland – it is sacred. As sacred as mother or bread. Motherland is a place where I was born and where I live. It is the place I am ready to give my life for.
4. Soviet Motherland – it was a country where everything was done under force. It was a country that survived thanks to its natural resources, where grain was imported while in the beginning of this century Russia fed the whole Europe. “Sovok” could be compared with still water in a lake that

begins to rot. Same with the Soviet Russia – it became a still lake in which any bright idea was drawn.

5. New Russia – chaos, dis-order, banditism, a complete disarray in economy.

1. Male – it sounds proudly, the head of the family. Man must educate a son and grow a tree in the course of his life.
2. Typical man – smart, with moustaches, work-loving, a source of knowledge and wisdom. Woman – beautiful, cunning, attractive, with long hair.
3. Soviet man – smart, a little bit lazy; he works only under pressure (hungor, KGB, or something like that). Woman – fat, red-cheeked, talks a lot and has nothing to hurry to.
4. New Russian – a portable phone is a must, a huge golden chain on his neck, too, as well as a very expensive car. On each finger he has a ring. And his wife is a doll in his hands. He must be connected with criminal structures.
5. Post-Soviet person – this is a person who all his life was forced to live according to the official instructions. Now, when these instructions disappeared, he does not know what to do. He is learning how to live a new life, how to independently solve the problems. In the soviet time it was done by instructions, directives, and decrees.

F-20-m/o

1. Nationality is reflected in language, traditions, culture.
2. “Russian” – a person living in Russia, the one who considers him/her self Russian, even if there is a “foreign blood” in this person’s veins. The notion “truly Russian” is so vague that it has become almost unreal. Being Russian is rather about internal feeling, about mood of the person.
3. Motherland. First of all, this is the place of your birth, the place of your parents’ birth (it is good when these places are the same, though it is not bad at all when these places are totally different). Also, Motherland is the place of one’s childhood.
4. The Soviet Union – something grand, metallic, and... rusty. From outside, it is light and shiny, but inside some mechanisms are lacking (have been stolen). Generally speaking, I have a good memory of it: a strong faith in the future, a feeling of being protected, a sense of confidence in exclusive (and non-ordinary) nature of my country, in its righteousness.
5. Again, something very mighty; a “monster” that is sleeping. Current situation reminds me of spring when everything changes to the best.

1. Gender – this notion divides people into two parts – men and women who differ from each other in terms of physical, psychic, and possibly mental qualities.
2. Man – with a short hair-cut, in pants (even though this sounds banal), maybe with a beard. Strong, brave, capable of protecting and earning enough money to live.
3. Woman – she has light step and intuition; she is kind, nice, and defenseless; a good mother.
4. Soviet man – a weak, helpless, without any initiative; he has no spine but at the same time he praises friendship and is totally unselfish. Soviet woman – is his direct opposite.
5. New Russian man – a man making money. His main priority – material values. We have two categories of new Russian now:
 - a) criminal (and not exactly) groups that make money mostly illegally. They consider themselves as hard-core people but I would not define them as Russian, though.
 - b) people who have made money by all available means and who live now in a relative affluence (or maybe even better). Now they start thinking about the meaning of life. They belong to educated intelligentsia. To the “high society.”

6. I can classify people who do not fit these categories, too:

- a) hard-working, toiling people, who, however, can barely make ends meet;
- b) "destroyed," "overcome" people who used to rely on the States and who do not want to work on their own (pensioners, retired)
- c) beggars, homeless.

M-18-tehn

- 1. Nationality – a line in the passport.
- 2. What is Motherland? "I like her even though she is hardly a beauty," – there is a song with such lyrics. Motherland is the place departure from which makes anything else abominable.
- 3. Russian – not necessarily a "New."
- 4. Soviet Motherland – it is beginning of everything (there is a song about that, too). "Sovok" ["Sovok" is a derogative derivative from the "Soviet"] is about the things we did not like. The Soviet Union – is about the things we were proud of.
- 5. New Russia – more and better music than in the old Union.

- 1. Gender – a manner of behavior, plus some physiological differences.
- 2. The thing is – not to be like everything else. I do not like to be herded.
- 3. Soviet man and Soviet woman – people like anyone else, but brainwashed.
- 4. Post-soviet people – they are people who are slightly older than I, and who still remember the way it was before and who understand the difference.

F-17-tehn

- 1. Nationality – everyone has one's own nationality. It is defined by place of birth, by language, by customs, traditions, character, etc.
- 2. Motherland – the place of birth. Country, city, town, village. But it is not just about the place, it is the place where the person grew up, where he/she spent his/her childhood, youth, all life. Individuals choose their Motherland themselves. That is, Motherland is the places that the person likes, where he/she left a part of his/her life, the places that evoke remembrances in the person.
- 3. When I hear the word "Russian" I instantly have a picture of a Russian man, a good man. These people have broad, sincere soul. They are strong and patient people who were able to have overcome great difficulties and who will overcome even bigger ones.
- 4. The Soviet Union – it is Russia in a certain historical period, in a very difficult period. It was a period when Russia was not free, when it was in the grip, as it were. There was no individual life; but there was 'society as whole'. People did not have private life, there was collective life only.
- 5. New Russia – free, but falling apart Russia. But this is temporary only. Very soon it becomes stronger and will rise above other countries. But to make this elevation happen the country needs a strong leader who would help Russia.

- 1. Person could be either male or female. A person of female gender is woman, and her functions in this world are very different from the functions of the person with male gender, i.e., man.

2. Ideal man – his appearance does not matter at all, his personal qualities do. Such as strength and kindness; he loves his job, his wife, mother, children; he knows how to find a solution in a very complicated situation; he is reliable and supportive.

Ideal woman – her look matters, but it is not the most important thing. She should be nice, slim, kind, smart, tender, loving, and patient person.

3. Soviet man and woman – they are indistinguishable from each other; they were just ‘soviet person’ chained by the bureaucratic regime.

4. New Russian – a man who has a lot of money earned illegally; he is empty-headed and dumb, with a golden neck-chain thick as a finger.

F-18-fil

1. Nationality does not mean much to me. To my (very subjective) view the person is influenced a lot by the people around him, by the environment. As to “mentality”, I think it is a very conditional term. Nationality is a belonging to a family. To a lesser degree it is belonging to the country in which the person is developing, but not in which he was born (well, maybe I take the desirable for the real).

2. I consider myself Russian because I live in Russia and think in Russian. But then again, I was born in Moldavia, not in Russia; but the crucial moments when something was being broken and built in me happened in Russia. In some sense it is possible to define “Russian” as “without qualities”. I do not see any specific features of this nationality (which says a lot about my limited experience and nothing about these features).

3. Motherland is a country. In my case it is USSR; maybe this is why I have all these cosmopolitan ideas. The Union was huge, and due to my child age I had no doubt about negative aspects of cosmopolitan views.

4. The Soviet Union – a strong state that was the state for the sake of its own. In that respect our state was a certain exception. Usually there is the people for the state or the state for the people. We – or rather they – managed to have created something “mechanical,” a “thing-in-itself”.

5. Soviet Russia – for me, by some reason, Russia was always a symbol of something decent, real (what happens to my cosmopolitanism?) Maybe because in my mind it was Russia that initiated all those “genius ideas of the Soviet state” that was the only possible kind of state for me. Nowadays the notion of Soviet Russia almost does not cross my mind. There is no reason. And too much of sadness. “Sovok” as a typical kind of the Soviet man is a real phenomenon. But I have no right to use this name for the whole people. For there were some exceptions. No, not the exceptions (otherwise it would have proved the rule); there were just people. Who were no “Sovok”.

6. New Russia. Some time ago – about one year – I was absolutely sure that the years of the Soviet history were a black hole in the development of our society. Now I think that it was exactly the processes that were developing in society that made such a notion as New Russia possible. New Russia – a new state with very old roots, with big ambitions, weak psychic structure and tender feelings to those who are around (excuse my romanticism, please).

1. Gender – biological belonging. Only biological.

2. For me the most important sign is not the gender, but human qualities. I.e., it is more important whether he is a good person than whether he is a good male or female, for these characteristics are not “sincere”, they are masks necessary for any society. Man and woman need to combine in their personality their ‘human’ qualities with their biological ones.

3. Man: intellect, tact, wisdom, patience, power/strength, stamina.

4. Woman: intellect, tact, psychic stability, prudence, power/strength, stamina, tenderness.

5. In the Soviet person "human" qualities got confused a little bit. Civic qualities were the most important; after that – biological ones.
6. New Russian is a logical consequence of "Sovok". Nothing else could have happened. The same ordinary level, a lack of attention, impossibility of serious intellectual development. The same stress on biological qualities. Man makes money, woman spends time with children. It looks almost right, but to be right it must be accompanied by human development, individual education and self-confidence.
7. Post-Soviet people people who had a strong faith in something; and who could not change their faith. It could not be otherwise if their faith was really a faith.

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